Bandwagon

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society Vol. 65 No. 4 2021

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About the Covers

The photograph on our cover was taken early in Clyde Beatty's career when he was with Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. Beatty is seen in the early 1930s posing with Nero, one of his favorite and most trusted lions. On January 23, 1932, during a rehearsal at the Peru, Indiana winter quarters, three lions attacked Beatty and one of them, Nero, severely mauled his right leg. A resulting infection led to a nine-week hospital stay. Even so, Beatty faced Nero again, and he appeared with the large male lion in the 1933 movie, *The Big Cage*.

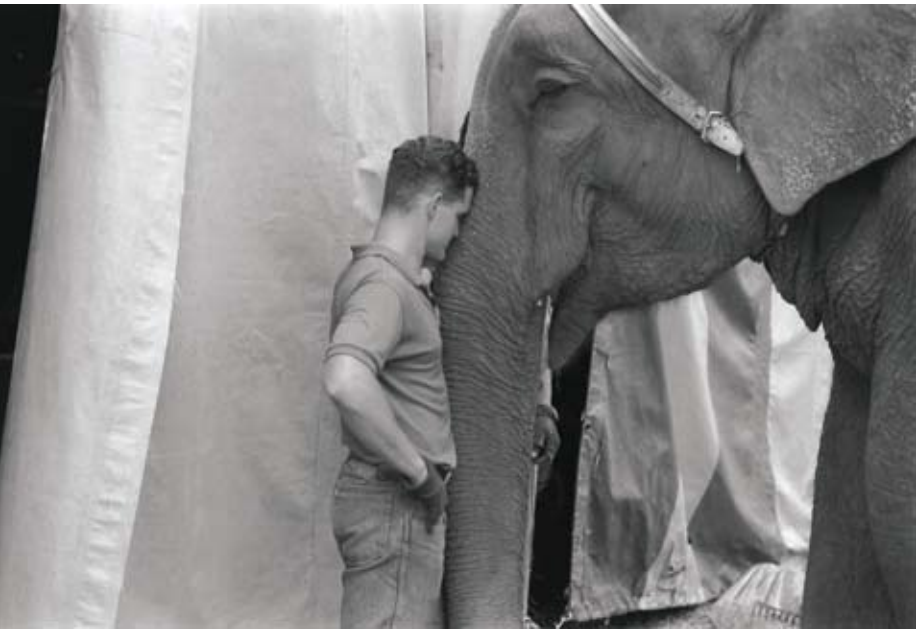
Clyde Beatty has been on *Bandwagon's* cover on six previous occasions. Roland Butler's artwork for the 1957 Clyde Beatty Circus program was the journal's first-ever four-color front image for the March-April 1960 issue. The July-August 1965 issue honored Beatty with a photo following his death that year. The May-June 1975 issue had Forrest Freeland's art for a Clyde Beatty Circus poster. Next was the 1935 Cole Bros. program cover that was reproduced for *Bandwagon* in March-April 2000. The March-April 2005 issue featured a Hagenbeck-Wallace poster for Beatty's act. And, a 1936 *Darkest Africa* poster appeared on the cover in March-April 2013.

The picture on *Bandwagon's* back cover is representative of scores of photos for which Beatty posed with his cub lions or tigers over the years. Beatty's affection for the scrappy young animals clearly comes through in this 1955 photo.

GTP

Stuart Thayer Prize

Congratulations to Dawn V. Rogala, winner of the Circus Historical Society's 2021 Stuart Thayer Prize for her book: *When the Circus Came to Town!* (photographs by Dawn V. Rogala; essays by Rogala, David E. Haberstich, and Shannon T. Perich, Smithsonian Scholarly Press, 2020). Ms. Rogala is a Conservator and Program Manager at the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute. Her book consists of her photographs taken on eleven different tented shows. The *Dawn V. Rogala Circus Photographs and Papers Collection* at the National Museum of American History is the largest circus collection at the Smithsonian Institution.



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"To preserve, promote, and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present."

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From the Editor

In this issue of *Bandwagon,* you will find Clyde Beatty's full story as told by Chris Berry with Dave Price. You will also discover additional revelations of circus history authored by Tim Tegge, Adrienne Saint-Pierre, Chris Berry and Lane Talburt. A gargantuan size thank-you to each of these stellar contributors.

The Greatest of the Great

I was fascinated by wild animal acts when I was a young boy. Apparently, I saw Trevor Bale's tigers just after I turned four, although I do not remember his performance under the Ringling-Barnum tent. Things were different in 1958 when Dad took me to Davenport, Iowa to see Cristiani Bros. two weeks shy of my eighth birthday. I devoted much of a rainy July morning to "playing" with Eddie Kuhn's cub lions, Philly and Dilly, who had been born on May 13 in West Virginia. I took one of them on a leash for a long walk inside the big top as chairs were being placed for the reserved seating – a memory I continue to treasure. Kuhn's act also made a noteworthy impression on me during the two-day stand.

The day of days, however, was July 20, 1962. Dad and I arrived on the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. lot in Burlington, Iowa about an hour before the start of the matinee. We met Edna Antes at the side door of the white ticket truck spotted at the front end of the midway, and in short order she wrote us a pass for Section D. This would be the first time I would see this show and its famed wild animal trainer.

The mammoth tent filled up around me as I sat in front of the center ring. At the time, I did not understand why *The World's Largest Circus* began its performance with fairly elementary loop-the-loop acts over each end ring. I was unaware that these revolving aerialists were providing time for late comers to find their seats and revving up the audience for the show's namesake presentation. As soon as the two girls slid down their webs, the ringmaster began:

On July 19, 1958, a two-month-old lion was the center of attention for the future editor of the Circus Historical Society's journal.

This photograph captured the essence of Clyde Beatty's appeal as he presented his roll-over tiger in the steel-bound arena.

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In 1962, Bob Parkinson and his son, Greg, collected Beatty-Cole paper during several Mid-western dates, including this half sheet that advertised the show's featured star in Sterling, Illinois.

"Next, we direct your attention to the giant steel arena in the center ring, where you are about to witness the largest group of performing black-maned African lions and Royal Bengal tigers ever assembled…trained and now presented by the foremost wild animal subjugator of all time…a man you've seen many many times on your television sets and motion picture screens…Ladies and Gentlemen… the one, the only…the incomparable…the Greatest of the Great…Clyde…Baay-tee!"

From the moment Beatty dashed into the circular steel arena, I was spellbound. Right before my eyes the circus superstar was fighting off one charging lion after another and commanding snarling tigers to roll over and spin around, all as Browning's brass band blared on.

The bright lights of the night show made Beatty's act seem even more thrilling, if that was possible. Armed with a wooden kitchen chair, a whip, a blank-firing pistol and more courage than I had ever imagined possible, the man was larger than life. He seemed to face a close encounter with death at every turn.

Dad and I watched most of the tear-down after the show, but we left the lot before the big top canvas was spooled. We followed one of the red elephant trucks down the highway as it made its way along the 118-mile jump to the next stand in Sterling, Illinois. On the new lot, we crashed in the car and got a few hours of sleep before sunrise.

That picture-perfect day in Sterling was one of the most magnificent adventures of my life. With temperatures staying in the 70s, dad and I surveyed the full setup. We again took in both performances and found time between shows to pull Beatty-Cole posters from store windows.

During those two days, I had seen Beatty perform four times – each before thunderous near sell-out crowds. What a supercharged dynamo he was!

Times change, of course, and Beatty's fighting-style act under the big top eventually gave way to the superb European-style of Gunther Gebel-Williams and others. Yet, no one else ever put me on the edge of my seat as Clyde Beatty had. How fortunate I was to have seen "the Greatest of the Great."

Lions and Tigers

America in the 1920s and 30s was intrigued by what a later generation would call "pop culture icons." The accomplishments of public figures such as Charles Lindbergh and Babe Ruth, along with the exploits of Hollywood actors and big-city gangsters were all front-page news. Soon these early media stars were joined by a handsome young man who tempted death daily by entering a steel-bound arena filled with "40 of the most ferocious beasts that breathe."

In a short period of time Clyde Beatty's name was known from coast-to-coast, yet unlike those who had achieved their fame in Hollywood or a faraway baseball stadium, Beatty's reputation was earned through live performances in hundreds of cities and towns across America.

As Beatty achieved stardom, his courage in the circus ring became legendary, including the tale of a performance that he gave during a drenching downpour that was accompanied by powerful winds. Those who repeated the story told of how Beatty was in the cage alone, surrounded by dozens of lions and tigers. As quarter poles began to dance, the lights in the tent first flickered, then went out. Beatty waited calmly for the lights to return and lit a cigarette in the dark tent. When the lights came back on, "the young master of jungle beasts escaped, unscathed from his dilemma."

It was a sensational story, but not a word of it was true. In fact, Beatty never smoked.[1]

It has been 100 years since Clyde Beatty left home to join the circus and as decades passed the legend has grown, embellished by creative press agents, a legion of well-meaning fans and even perpetuated by Beatty himself. Nevertheless, though small in stature, nearly 60 years after his final performance, Clyde Beatty remains a giant in the history of the American circus.

This is his story.

As Beatty explained it, destiny arrived in the spring of 1912 when he was sitting in a barber chair in his hometown of Bainbridge, Ohio. As the youngster was getting a haircut, the conversation turned to a horrible accident that had happened at the Sun Bros. Circus in the nearby town of Rainsboro. According to the man who was talking, a lion trainer had been killed during the performance and his assistant was going to take over the act when the show arrived in nearby Chillicothe on May 15.[2]

Although "Buster" Beatty was only eight years old at the

time,[3] he remembered seeing the Sun Bros. performance and being "entranced" by the wild animals. He later learned that the stranger in the barber shop was actually a circus advance man, and when he related the story to Gus Sun many years later, the circus owner smiled and said, "We used to have that trainer killed in every little town we came to… you would be surprised how many gullible guys like you believed it."[4]

Perhaps one of the reasons that young Clyde was entranced during that performance was his love affair with animals that began long before he entered the circus ring. "I had a regular menagerie at home," he once said. "Raccoons, possums, and Guinea pigs. I used to charge kids a penny to see them[5]

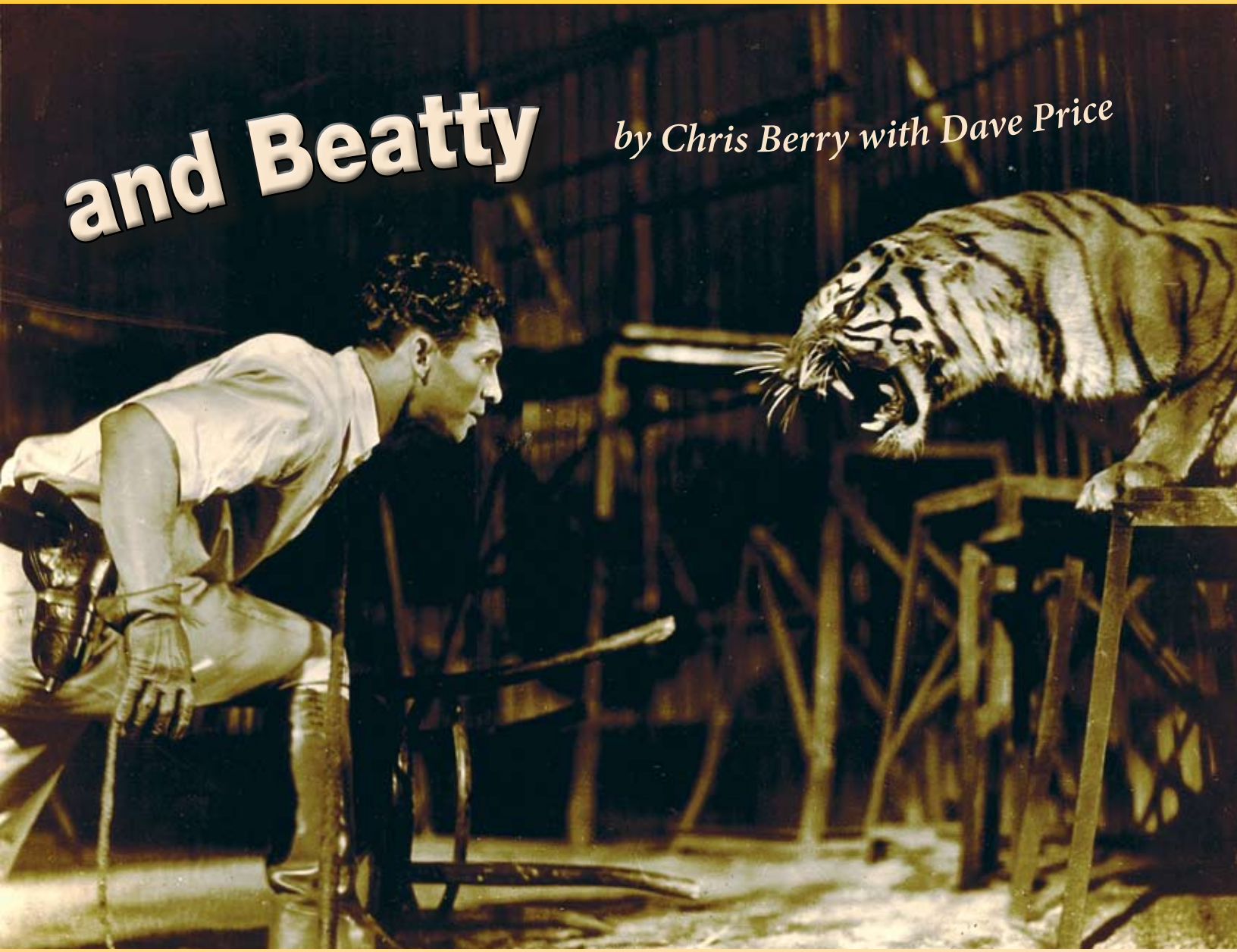
As Clyde grew older, he visited other circuses and became intrigued by the idea of life on the road. When he was 18 years old, he learned that the Howe's Great London and Van Amburgh Trained Wild Animal Shows was coming to the nearby town of Washington Court House. On the morning of August 16, 1921, Clyde and some of his buddies hopped a freight train and made their way to the circus grounds about 30 miles from their hometown of Bainbridge.

One of those who was with the circus that day was clown Abe Goldstein, and more than 50 years later he recalled the summer day when a clean-cut teenager approached him in the menagerie tent. "He asked me if he could get a job on the show with the animals," he said. "Louie Roth, the menagerie superintendent, gave him a job to take care of the hip cage."[6]

The previous spring the American Circus Corporation

and Beatty

by Chris Berry with Dave Price



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Clyde Beatty attended his first circus when he was eight years old and soon assembled a small menagerie of pets that he would display for neighborhood children. This photo was taken c.1912.

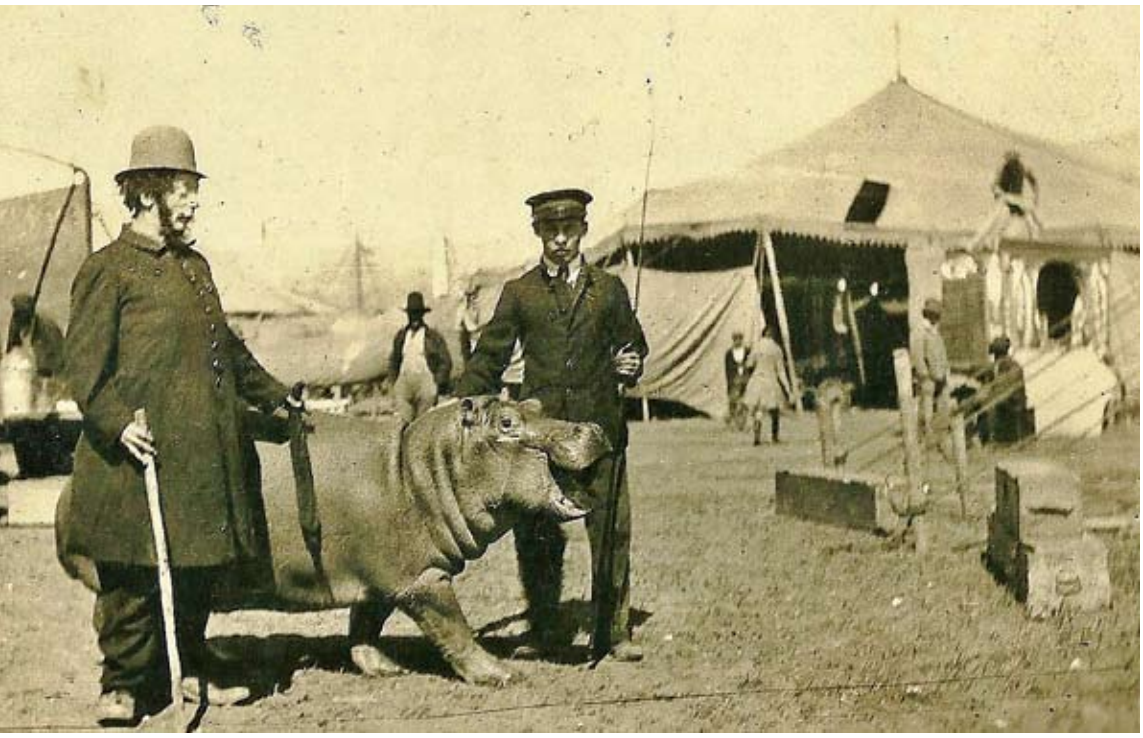
had purchased a baby hippopotamus named Vic from the National Zoo in Washington.[7] When Howe's Great London arrived in Ohio that summer, it was six months old and already weighed nearly 1200 pounds. Clyde Beatty was hired that day to take care of the hippo and keep its water tank filled.

Another newcomer who had begun his own circus career with Howe's Great London that year was Emmett Kelly, who had joined on as a trapeze performer only a few months before. As Kelly later reflected on that first tour, he remembered a route that started in Albuquerque, New Mexico and moved north into Canada before Beatty joined the show in Washington Court House in mid-summer. It was there that Emmett Kelly and Clyde Beatty began a friendship that lasted more than 40 years. "I got to know Clyde very well and found him to be one of the finest boys I have ever met," he wrote, adding, "He came up in show business the hard way, plenty of love for animals, and he went on to be the greatest animal trainer of our time."[8]

Although he was only 18 years old, young Clyde quickly gained the trust of circus management. When the 1921 season ended, the teenager was given the responsibility of escorting the hippo to West Baden, Indiana where it was added to the menagerie of an indoor circus that was being framed by the American Circus Corporation.[9] After delivering the cargo, Beatty reported to Montgomery, Alabama where the Howe's circus was being revamped for the coming season.

That winter Clyde was put to work as a cage boy, and while he was in Montgomery, he helped Louis Roth develop an act with ten female lions. That display, along with a stunt where a lion was raised into the air by a balloon, would be part of the show that was retitled as Gollmar Bros. for the 1922 tour.[10]

"I did not pay too much attention to him at the time because we hired cage boys in just about every town, and he was just another cage boy," Charles "Chubby" Guilfoyle recalled decades later. "Somewhere along the line I made him my assistant – and I do not remember now just why, except that he seemed to get along with the animals pretty well."[11]



In 1922, Clown Abe Goldstein appeared with a hippopotamus named Victor during performances of the Gollmar Bros. Circus. Young Clyde Beatty made his first appearance under the big top as he led the animal around the hippodrome track.

The opportunity to help train the wild animals lit a fire in Beatty. "Every day my fascination grew with the big beasts," he said, "and every day I resolved to master them."[12]

As Clyde was preparing to leave Montgomery for his first full season under canvas, he wrote to his boyhood friend Clarence "Ciby" Pennwell and described the excitement of the open road, "for you get to see a lot of the country." He then proudly detailed the route that would take him far from home, to places he had never been. He also promised to keep his

friends in Bainbridge updated on his circus adventures.[13]

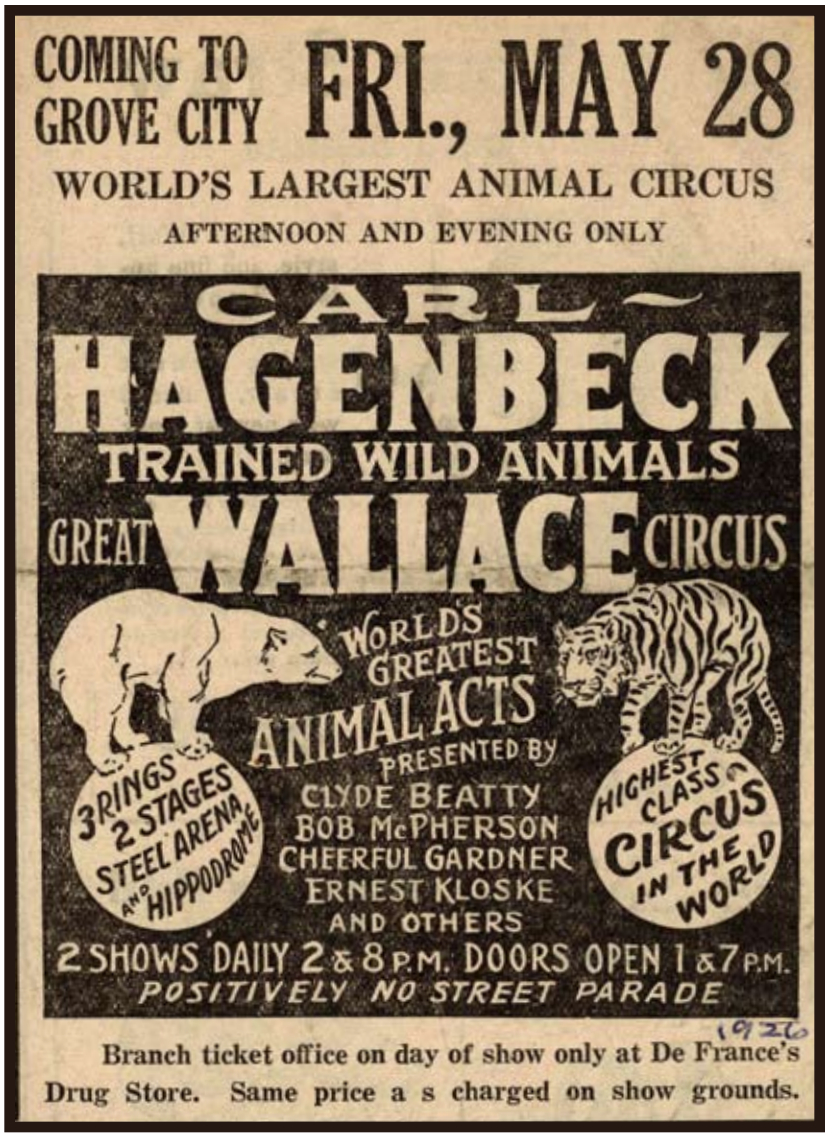
What Clyde may *not* have known at the time was that his duties would soon take him from the menagerie into the big top.

During the 1922 Gollmar Bros. performance, Clyde was assigned the important job of opening and closing the cage during Peter Taylor's big wild animal act. He also appeared on the hippodrome track with Victor the hippo and clown Abe Goldstein. According to Goldstein, during every performance the three would make their way around the tent, the clown walking ahead of the hippo which was guided by Beatty. "Every time I stopped, the hip would bite me on the butt, then I would throw bran in his mouth," he recalled. "I used to tip Clyde two dollars a week for working with me."[14]

When the season ended, the American Circus Corporation folded the staff and equipment of Gollmar Bros. into its co-owned John Robinson Circus. Among those who moved to the enlarged show was 19-year-old Clyde, along with a small group of polar bears that were now his responsibility.

It was with those polar bears on the John Robinson Circus of 1923 that Beatty made his first appearance in the steel arena. "The trainer had left the act and I started looking around for a man," Chubby Guilfoyle recalled. "I suddenly thought to myself, 'why look for a man when I have a boy who can handle the act.' "[15]

Even though he was still a teenager Clyde Beatty had found his calling, and the contributions he made to the Robinson performance were recorded in both the 1923 program and route book. Years later when discussing his long career, he was asked which animal was most dangerous. The answer was polar bears because their poker faces were hard to read, and that made it difficult to anticipate their next move.[16]


COMING TO GROVE CITY
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GREAT WALLACE CIRCUS
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BOB McPHERSON
CHEERFUL GARDNER
ERNEST KLOSKE
AND OTHERS
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POSITIVELY NO STREET PARADE
1926
Branch ticket office on day of show only at De France's
Drug Store. Same price a s charged on show grounds.

Although he was only 22 years old, Clyde Beatty was given top billing on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in the spring of 1926.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

One of those who remembered Beatty's first performances in the John Robinson arena was a billposter for the show named Fred Curry. Years later Curry recalled that even then the youngster's talent was obvious, and many of those on the show predicted that Beatty would have a bright future as an animal trainer.[17]

It was during those early days with the John Robinson Circus that Beatty became inspired by the talent and showmanship of Peter Taylor who presented a "fighting act" in a cage filled with lions and tigers. Each day young Clyde would study the fast-paced performance and he later gave Taylor credit for the high-energy presentation that later defined his own act.

Despite Taylor's skill in the arena, in early February of 1924 the British-born trainer was nearly killed when he slipped on ice at winter quarters in Peru, Indiana. Taylor had been teaching an elephant to carry a tiger on its back when he fell, and the elephant tried to gore him with its tusks. The accident was unnerving for Taylor who realized that it was only the quick action of his assistants that saved his life.[18]

Despite the close call, Taylor's lions and tigers were among the six arena acts on the Robinson program in 1924. When the show opened indoors at the Cleveland Arena, a reviewer for *The New York Clipper* wrote that the John Robinson Circus was "a true wild animal show."[19]

Clyde Beatty opened the Cleveland performance with the same polar bear act he had worked the previous season and halfway through the show he returned with a bear that rode a horse in an end ring.[20]

Other animal acts on the Robinson circus in 1924 included Chubby Guilfoyle with a display that Beatty later referred to as "the preliminary act" or "the prelim." The im-

pressive display appeared early on the program ahead of the featured wild animal act, and included a group of brown bears, leopards, pumas, lions, hyenas and a black panther. Later in the show Guilfoyle's wife Hattie appeared with a group of leopards.

The John Robinson program also included Margaret Thompson who presented the lioness that had been trained to ride a horse, as well as Dolly Castle who appeared with an elephant-riding tiger. The big feature was Peter Taylor's cat act which was made up of 16 lions and tigers.[21]

At the end of the 1924 season, the American Circus Corporation transferred the John Robinson show from its winter quarters in Peru, Indiana to West Baden about 175 miles away. At the same time, Hagenbeck-Wallace, which had previously wintered in West Baden, relocated to Peru.

Among those who made the move from Robinson to Hagenbeck-Wallace were Peter Taylor and Clyde Beatty. Although Beatty's destiny was to become a center ring sensation with Hagenbeck-Wallace, fate was not as kind to his mentor.

Both Beatty and Taylor were scheduled to appear in the big Detroit Shrine Circus in February of 1925. Beatty was booked with his polar bears along with the mixed "prelim" act that Guilfoyle had worked on John Robinson. Taylor was featured with his lions and tigers.

As Taylor was preparing for the January opening, he was hospitalized for what his doctors diagnosed as a nervous breakdown.[22] The medical team that was treating him wrote to circus management and advised that the trainer needed plenty of rest and he should avoid performing until he recovered. Hagenbeck-Wallace manager Danny Odom reluctantly cancelled Taylor's appearance in Detroit.[23]

When the outdoor season began, Peter Taylor was back with his 16 big cats and what was billed as the "world's largest mixed group of tigers and lions." Beatty was also on the Hagenbeck-Wallace program, presenting the mixed "prelim act" as well as his polar bear display.[24]

While the 1925 tour started without incident, within a matter of weeks Taylor was back in the hospital. As he was entering the arena during a matinee performance in Middletown, Connecticut, Taylor collapsed in the safety cage. According to witnesses, a male lion leapt at the trainer and reached through the bars with his claws extended.

When the big cat lunged for him, Taylor dodged the lion but fainted and fell, injuring his neck. When he did not regain consciousness he was rushed by ambulance to the local hospital.[25]

With the show's star performer hospitalized and the future of the featured wild animal act uncertain, general manager Danny Odom was scrambling for a solution. "Clyde told him that he had studied the act since the show had opened and that he could work it," longtime showman Theo

During the late 1920s, Clyde Beatty added lions and tigers to what was already a large wild animal act. The big cats were trained at the Hagenbeck-Wallace winter quarters in Peru, Indiana. The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Circus Collection

Forestall recalled. "Odom was doubtful and told him, 'They will kill you!'" According to Forestall, Odom soon realized that he had no other option, and he reluctantly gave his OK.[26]

On the night of July 2, 1925, Clyde Beatty went into the cage for the first time with 18 lions and tigers that had been trained and worked by his mentor. After that first performance *Taylor's* act became *Beatty's* act.

Clyde Beatty spent the next ten years as the headliner for Hagenbeck-Wallace. Peter Taylor never returned to the show.

Less than two weeks after Beatty took over the act, the newspaper in Wichita, Kansas called the young trainer, "easily the feature of Hagenbeck-Wallace." The reporter who reviewed the show was impressed and wrote, "more than once the vast audience leaned forward as one person, breathless, as a huge black-maned monster of the dark continent lunged at Beatty's throat." [27]

Hagenbeck-Wallace billed the young trainer as "Captain Clyde Beatty" beginning in 1928.

Despite his daring, the danger was real. During the evening performance in Texarkana, Arkansas, Nero,[28] the largest of the lions, slapped at Beatty and knocked his chair out of his hand. As the young trainer fell to the ground a lioness jumped on top of him, ripping her claws deep into his arm and lacerating it from shoulder to wrist.[29] Although covered with blood, Beatty stayed in the arena and finished the act.[30]

The story of the Texarkana attack was flashed across the country and while it had been less than three months since he started working the big wild animal act, newspaper readers from coast-to-coast were already learning of Clyde Beatty and his exploits.[31]

Throughout the late 1920s, Beatty's profile in the circus world continued to grow. The recognition came in many ways, including photos in the Hagenbeck-Wallace program and billing that described him as "America's youngest and most fearless wild animal trainer."

At the same time that his public image was being molded, his private life brought him into contact with Ernestine Pegg, a young woman who lived near the circus winter quarters in Peru. The two were married January 26, 1926, and a year later Ernestine gave birth to a daughter, Joyce Beatty.

Joyce's daughter – and Clyde's granddaughter – Sandra Ploss said that although the marriage between her grandparents only lasted a little more than five years, Beatty maintained a presence in her life and that of her mother as they would visit him in Indiana, Florida and California.

According to Ploss, at the time of the marriage her grandmother did not fully grasp the nature of Beatty's career. "I think she really thought that once they got married and my mom was born that he would, in her words, 'stop this nonsense' and get a job."[32]

Even with an infant at home in Indiana, it would have been difficult for Beatty to return to Peru during a year when *The Billboard* proclaimed his wild animal act "the outstanding feature" of the Hagenbeck-Wallace program.[33]

After the 1927 season closed and while the circus was in winter quarters, it was announced that when the show opened in the spring Beatty would work 34 lions and tigers in a newly designed cage which allowed for various sizes of pedestals. There were also reports that special lithographs were being designed for the act, and during the performance he would dress in a military uniform and be billed as "Captain Clyde Beatty."[34]

The Hagenbeck-Wallace route of 1928 took the show to Chillicothe, one of several Ohio towns that claimed Beatty as its own, followed by a tour that took it to a number of state fairs where the circus was presented in the open air and audiences were seated in grandstands that were also used for horse races.

The show appeared at the Central States Expo in Aurora, Illinois, the Kansas Free Fair in Topeka, as well as State Fairs in Oklahoma and Texas. When the show was at the Nebraska State Fair in Lincoln on Labor Day, Hagenbeck-Wallace claimed that Beatty appeared before more than 50,000 people during the matinee performance, a number that management later boasted was the largest audience ever to see a circus.[35]

Shortly after the 1928 season ended, it was announced that Clyde would be taking a group of 26 lions and tigers on a winter vaudeville circuit that included theatres in Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and New York.[36] It was during the Detroit stand that a tiger named Gracie escaped from her cage in the middle of the night and wandered throughout the big Masonic Temple and hotel that was still under construction. Clyde was awakened from his sleep and using only a flashlight he eventually found the tiger in a part of the building not yet wired for electricity. More than 100 people were sleeping soundly in the hotel as Clyde coaxed Gracie down five flights of stairs and back to her cage.[37]

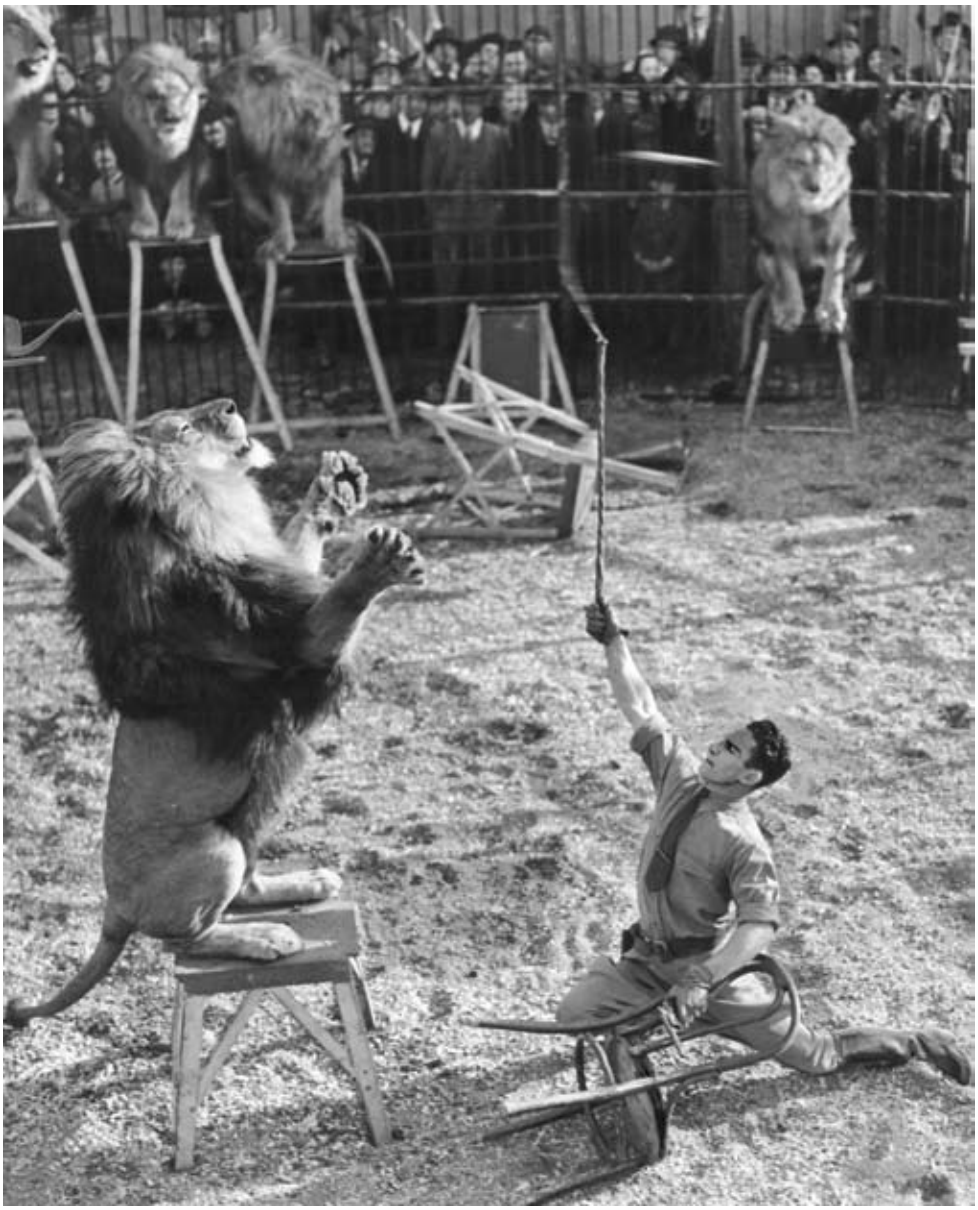
By 1929, Beatty's act had grown into a massive display which *The Billboard* reviewed twice that season. On both

occasions, reporters claimed to have seen Beatty performing with 32 lions and tigers.[38] *The Billboard* declared it was "the biggest wild animal act ever" and "…a number that always gets a big hand."[39]

Among those who applauded Clyde's success that summer were his friends in Chillicothe who decorated the town with flags and banners prior to the arrival of Hagenbeck-Wallace. Beatty was given a tremendous reception on June 27, and as speeches were given, he was presented with keys to the city. Huge crowds also made their way to the showgrounds that day as newspapers welcomed Clyde "home" and merchants held special sales in his honor.[40]

The same newspapers that had celebrated his visit to Chillicothe solemnly reported a few days later that the local hero had been attacked by a lion during a matinee performance in Paris, Illinois.[41] Although he was bleeding profusely, Beatty finished the act and was immediately rushed to a hospital where his wounds were dressed. That night he insisted on working the evening performance.[42]

A few days later the circus was in Lawrence, Kansas when news broke that John Ringling had purchased the American Circus Corporation which included Hagenbeck-Wallace and four other active shows. It was an event that would alter the trajectory of Clyde Beatty's career.



Beatty exercised his cats throughout the off-season, and in early 1930 he was injured during a rehearsal in Kokomo, Indiana. Among those watching that day was his future wife, showgirl Harriet Evans.

Many of the acts that had been featured on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1929 were also booked for the big Detroit Shrine Circus that opened in early 1930. When the show premiered at the Michigan State Fairgrounds, 14,000 people saw a circus that included Lillian Leitzel, the Wallendas, the Reiffenach riding act and the Flying Wards along with nearly 60 other acts in a performance that was kept on pace by Ringling's equestrian director Fred Bradna.

The star-studded program also featured Clyde Beatty who, for the first time, was touted as having an act made up of 22 lions and 18 tigers, a total of 40 big jungle cats.[43]

Although no photographs have surfaced that show Beatty in the cage with 40 lions and tigers, and documentation has been traced primarily to statements made by circus press agents, the concept of "40 Man-eating Lions and Royal Bengal Tigers" was highly promotable and linked to Clyde Beatty on lithographs and in newspaper copy for many years.

The discrepancy was pointed out a few months later when a reporter for *The Billboard* wrote that despite the billing, he only counted 26 lions and tigers in the cage with Beatty. While that was still an amazing feat, it was considerably short of the number of animals advertised.[44]

With the Detroit Shrine date complete, Beatty was in Kokomo, Indiana rehearsing for the 1930 season opener when two lions attacked a new tiger. For 20 minutes Beatty went round and round with the cats until the lions eventually killed the tiger. By then Beatty was bleeding from many scratches and cuts, however he stayed in the arena until each of the lions and tigers were driven out. When the last cat

In the early 1930s, Beatty took on the image of a jungle hunter on safari.

retreated Beatty collapsed and was taken to a hospital where his wounds were dressed. Only hours later he appeared bandaged and bruised at the first regular performance of the season. That night the lions and tigers performed as if nothing unusual had happened.[45]

During the early 1920s Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey had heavily promoted wild animal acts, however none had been featured on *The Greatest Show on Earth* since Mabel Stark had appeared in the center ring in 1924.

That changed on April 3, 1931 when the circus opened at Madison Square Garden in New York. The 27-year-old trainer was promoted as "The Greatest Thriller of the Century," and the New York press corps embraced his sensational act.[46]

The reviews of Beatty's performance were all complimentary, though the *New York Times* pointed out that while 40 cats had been advertised, "an actual count put the total number at just over a score." The *Times* did, however, acknowledge that "New York is said to be yearning for lions, tigers, pistols and whips."[47]

It was not just the local newspapers that took notice of the act. *Variety* said, "Young Beatty is all they say about him, steely nerved, spectacular, well appearing and above all a showman." The only negative in the review was the fact that "too much time was consumed in setting up and taking down the arena." The ordeal took 25 minutes on opening night.[48]

When the Madison Square Garden engagement concluded Beatty returned to Hagenbeck-Wallace, but in only a matter of weeks he was back in New York when that circus set up in Brooklyn for six days in early June.

Although Beatty delivered thrills at each performance, his wife had grown weary of having an absentee husband. On October 30, 1931, Ernestine Beatty was granted a divorce.[49] Now single, Clyde was asked to comment on his personal life. As he attempted to make light of the divorce, he told a reporter that while his livelihood depended on his ability to train dangerous animals, he preferred lions and tigers over women. "Gals are too hard to handle," he quipped.[50]

While news of bachelorhood was appearing in print, in reality during the 1931 season he had begun a relationship with a circus showgirl from Chicago named Harriet Evans.[51] Harriet's ancestry was Russian and both she and her sister Genoweffa had changed their last name from Iwicke to Evans when they entered show business as dancers.[52]

On January 23, 1932 Beatty was rushing through a rehearsal in hopes of catching a train to Chicago for a date with Harriet when Nero, the big lion, caught him off guard and knocked him to the ground. "I saw him coming for my throat, so I put my arm out, grabbed his mouth and held him off," he recalled.[53]

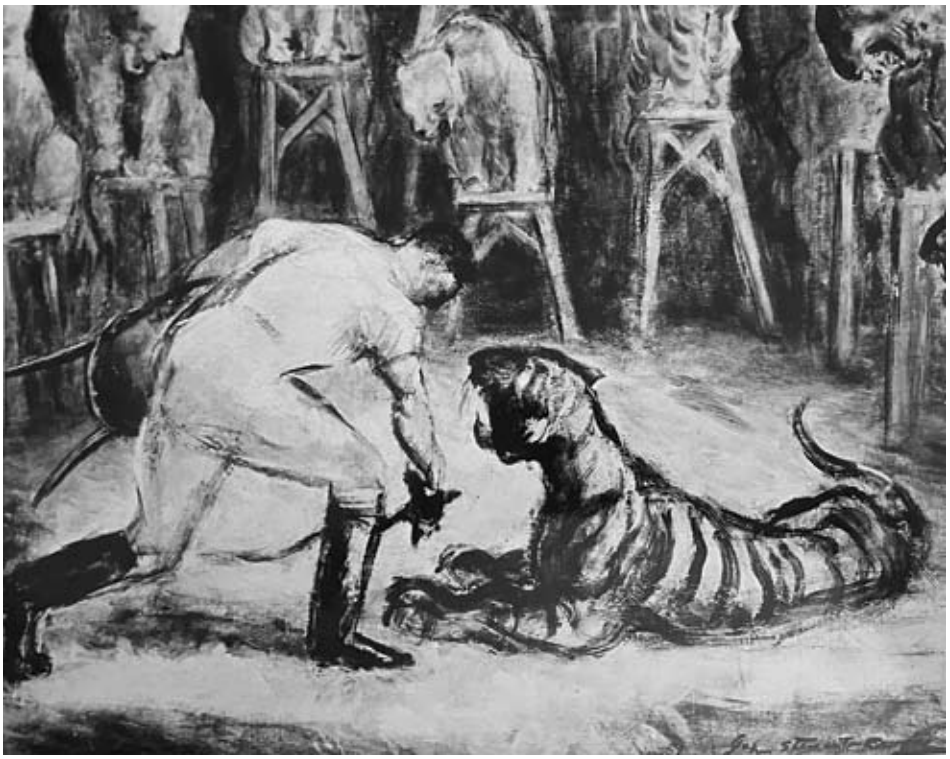
Despite his best efforts to fight the big lion, Nero was able to sink his teeth into Beatty's thigh before he was subdued. Although the wound was not initially thought to be serious,[54] six hours after Clyde was bitten his temperature spiked at 104 degrees and he slipped into a semi-coma.

The story of the attack was carried in newspapers around the world, and as headlines screamed "Clyde Beatty Is Near Death," it appeared that the trainer's days were numbered.[55]

Dr. Stephen Malouf was the Peru, Indiana physician who treated many of those with the circus. He was called to the hospital and after consulting with a team of doctors, it was suspected that the infection was caused by Pasteurella aerogenes, a very rare microbe.

"There were no miracle drugs at that time," Dr. Malouf recalled years later. With time running out and the doctors debating whether to amputate Beatty's leg, Malouf decided to operate in hopes of finding the source of the infection. "I enlarged the original area by a very long incision until I reached the femur bone and found a small pocket of pus away from the point of entry," he wrote. He then drained the wound and Clyde slowly recovered from the fever and infection.[56]

After a recuperation that stretched over two months, Beatty was eager to leave his wheelchair in time for the Ringling opening at Madison Square Garden. On April 5 nine truckloads of wild animals were loaded onto railroad cars in Peru and shipped to New York, where Beatty was again given top billing.[57]



American artist John Steuart Curry spent six weeks with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1932. While at Madison Square Garden, he made sketches of Clyde Beatty that were part of a series of circus paintings that he completed later that year.

Beatty added many lions and tigers to his act over 40 years. He later said that he preferred training grown cats rather than cubs raised by humans, as they often turned into "spoiled children." This c.1932 image was one of a series of photos taken by Harry Atwell of Chicago.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

A reporter for *The Billboard* was on hand for the opening performance and noted that Beatty "now had the added advantage of international publicity received this past winter when he lay near death after being clawed." The act was then described in detail and the reporter wrote that as he exited the cage the New York audience delivered "a deafening ovation."[58]

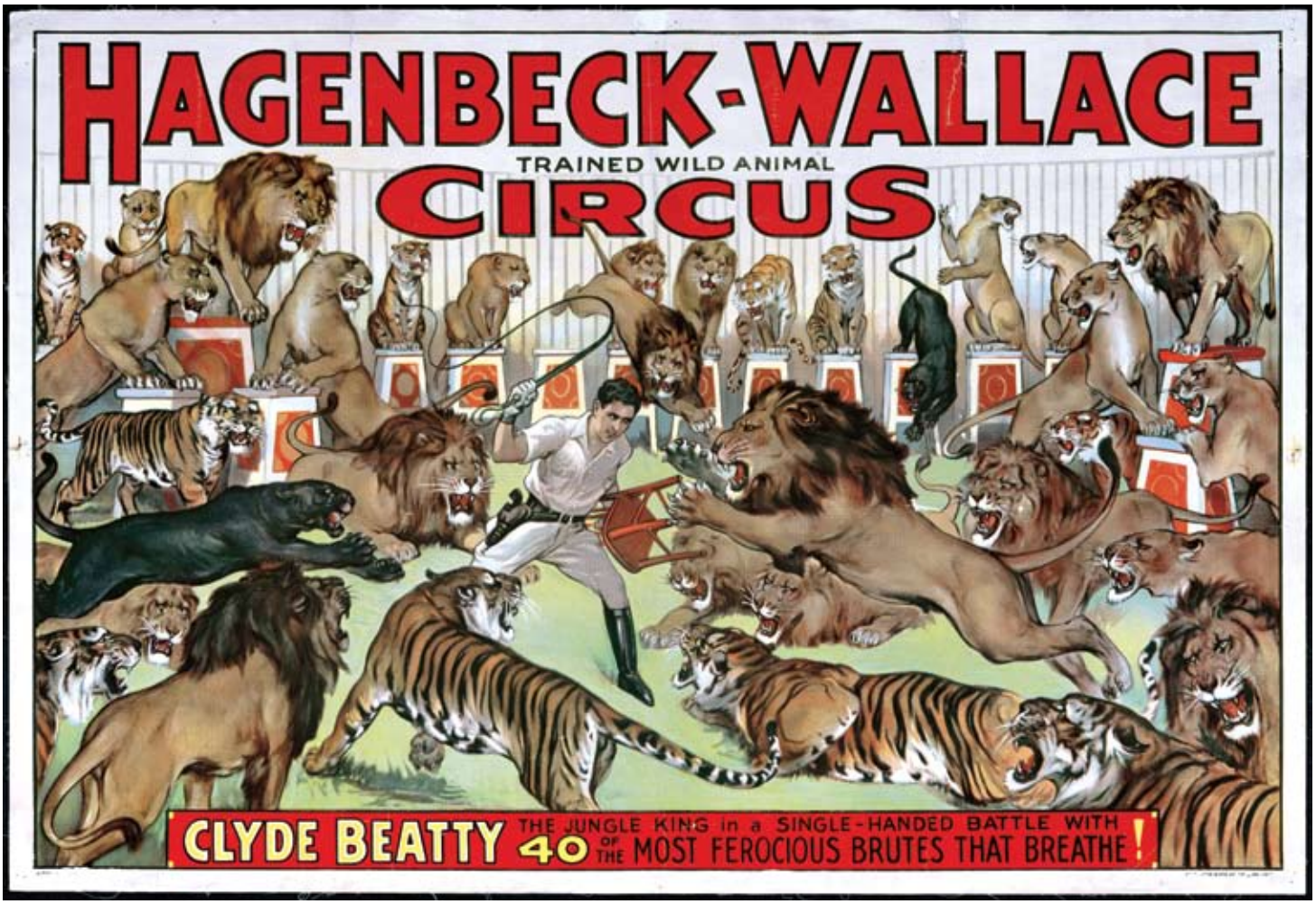
Although the country was still in the grip of The Great Depression, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey reported that the New York attendance in 1932 was best in seven years, despite the fact that the top price for tickets was a staggering $3.50. The performance ran three-and-a half hours, of which about 20 minutes was devoted to Clyde's big wild animal act.[59]

Beatty later said that while he was at the Garden that spring John Ringling approached him about staying on with the big show under canvas. Clyde reluctantly told the circus king that while he was flattered, he believed that his act would get lost in Ringling's enormous big top. In reality he said that he made the excuse so that he could return to Hagenbeck-Wallace where Harriet, who was now his fiancé, was performing.

After Beatty rejected the offer to join *The Greatest Show on Earth,* he said that John Ringling tersely responded, "Whatever you say," and turned his back on him.

Clyde initially thought that he might have offended Ringling but realized that was not the case when the boss looked over his shoulder and told him not to worry about the mounting doctor bills back in Peru, as the show had already paid them.[60]

Shortly before the circus opened in New York the book *Wild Cargo,* written by animal collector Frank Buck and author Edward Anthony, had been released. One afternoon Beatty dropped in on Anthony at his Manhattan office and asked if he would be interested in writing his life story. "My husband liked Clyde and admired him," his widow, Esther Anthony, said as she recalled her husband collaborating with Beatty on two books as


HAGENBECK-WALLACE
TRAINED WILD ANIMAL
CIRCUS
CLYDE BEATTY THE JUNGLE KING in a SINGLE-HANDED BATTLE WITH 40 OF THE MOST FEROCIOUS BRUTES THAT BREATHE!

The excitement and drama of Beatty's act was promised on thousands of lithographs and billboards that were posted in advance of circus day.

well as writing the script for his first film, *The Big Cage*.[61]

When the 1932 season closed, Clyde and Ed Anthony, along with 55 crates of lions, tigers, bears and props owned by Hagenbeck-Wallace were transported in two special baggage cars to Los Angeles.

Hollywood was ready for a new leading man, and on the day that he arrived Beatty put on a show for 300 newspaper reporters. The performance was presented on the same sound stage that had been used for the filming of *Phantom of the Opera*.[62]

The plot of *The Big Cage* centered around a failing circus that was betting its future on a big act with lions and tigers, and – of course – Clyde Beatty. The cast included Walter Brennan, Andy Devine and a young Mickey Rooney whose character "Jimmie" played a surrogate son to Beatty.

From the earliest days of motion pictures, "doubles" had been used whenever stars had to perform dangerous stunts. In this film, however, Beatty was the stunt-double any time

Beatty authored three autobiographies during his career. He collaborated with Edward Anthony on The Big Cage *and* Facing the Big Cats. *The book* Jungle Performers *was written with Earl Wilson.*

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

an actor appeared with one of the big cats. At one point the script called for a tiger to leap on Raymond Hatton who had been cast as an old and inebriated trainer. Had Hatton actually come in contact with the tiger, the result might have been disastrous. As Hatton's double, Beatty was made up as a rumpled alcoholic, however when he staggered into the cage the tiger recognized him and very gently pounced on him.[63]

Actor Wallace Ford did not get such a warm welcome when he was slashed while walking past a black leopard named Jiggs,[64] and another mishap occurred when veteran trainer John Helliott, who was assisting Beatty with the animals, suffered severe lacerations to his hand and arm.[65]

Dangerous as these episodes were, they were a godsend for the studio's press agents as each incident provided more ink for movie magazines and newspapers in advance of the picture's release.

The film version of *The Big Cage,* along with the book of the same title, both arrived in New York in April of 1933, at the same time the Ringling circus opened at Madison Square Garden. Even before the first New York performance, one columnist reported that Beatty had become such an enormous draw that John Ringling planned to produce a Broadway musical comedy starring the handsome young trainer and his cats.[66]

As New York prepared for the opening at the Garden, newspapers were filled with the story of a lioness that had slashed Beatty's arm during the Cleveland Grotto Circus. Although he said the incident was "of no consequence," it was the second time in two days he had been attacked and knocked down.[67]

When the 1933 "Golden Jubilee" season premiered in New York, the big wild animal act again appeared early on the program, and *The Billboard* reported that Beatty performed with 16 lions and seven tigers on opening night – still far short of the 40 that the circus press agents and posters promised.[68]

From New York Beatty accompanied the show to Boston where he spent his afternoons and evenings performing at the Garden and his mornings at local bookstores autographing *The Big Cage.* When the Boston engagement ended, Clyde rejoined Hagenbeck-Wallace under canvas and in June returned to New York where he appeared under the big top that was set up in the parking lot of Yankee Stadium.

It was during that time that press agents began to spread the story that animal dealer Carl Lorenz Hagenbeck, grandson of the circus' namesake, had seen the show and remarked, "Those cats will get Beatty. The act is too dangerous."[69]

Although Clyde had become accustomed to tempting fate in the arena, on September 16, 1933 he made a commitment to 24-year-old Harriet Evans. The two were married while the circus was in Bristol, Tennessee. According to *The Billboard* the marriage came as a surprise to those with the show, even though most were aware of the romance.[70]

As Beatty worked with individual cats, he also kept an eye on the other lions and tigers in the cage, ready to pounce should he lose control.

As soon as the circus was back in winter quarters, Clyde and Harriet flew from Indianapolis to Hollywood where he spent part of the winter filming his second motion picture, *The Lost Jungle.*

The film had been written as a 15-part "cliffhanger" serial where a new episode would be shown each week in the same theatre. In an unusual move, Mascot Pictures also released a 68-minute version of the picture. The feature version was filmed at the same time as the serial, but several principal scenes were reworked and different dia-

logue was added. The additional scenes provided an alternative story and a different ending for those who had also seen the 15-part serial.

Beatty's success in Hollywood exposed him to an audience that had not seen his circus performance, and that led to other marketing and financial opportunities. Starting in the 1930s Clyde's image began appearing in "Big Little Books," along with toys, comic books and wristwatches. All of these items kept Beatty in front of the public not only on circus day, but throughout the year.

It was the success that Clyde was having *outside* of the circus ring that soon raised flags for Ringling's management.

Although Beatty had developed a good relationship with John Ringling, by 1934 the last of the original brothers had been squeezed out of day-to-day management by creditors. The Ringling circus, along with Hagenbeck-Wallace and Al G. Barnes were now controlled by Samuel Gumpertz and

Clyde Beatty became a Hollywood star when The Big Cage *was released in 1933. He went on to appear in six feature films as well as two 15-part serials. In later years, he was a favorite on local and network television programs.*

while he believed that Beatty's films did have promotional value, he also considered them to be competition. Gumpertz thought that if someone had seen Beatty's act in a movie house, they might be reluctant to buy a ticket to see him in person.

The two butted heads from the moment that they arrived at Madison Square Garden in 1934. According to Beatty, Gumpertz would not give him rehearsal time in the arena which led to a very public argument that ended when Clyde stormed out of the Garden. While he was at his hotel, packing to leave the show, Beatty heard a knock on the door. It was Pat Valdo, the director of personnel, along with equestrian director Fred Bradna. Valdo and Bradna promised Clyde that if he would return to the Garden, he would be given the time to rehearse the big cats.[71]

Even before the New York stand ended, Gumpertz announced that when the circus returned to New York in 1935 Dorothy Herbert, the featured equestrienne on the show, would take over Beatty's place in the steel arena. He also said that her wild animal act would be made up of an astonishing 70 lions and tigers!

When reporters questioned Herbert how she could transition from training horses to big cats, the 24-year-old equestrienne said, "I have been experimenting with tigers for some time now and handling them does not seem so much different from handling untamed horses." The article was accompanied by a photograph of Dorothy Herbert in a menagerie cage wagon along with a tiger named Rajah.[72]

Beatty did not make the trip to Boston when the show closed at Madison Square Garden, instead he was immediately sent to Chicago where Hagenbeck-Wallace was opening indoors at the Stadium on West Madison Street.

As management of the Ringling organization debated whether Clyde's movies were overexposure or were simply a strong promotional tool, the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus train rolled into West Philadelphia only days after the release of *The Lost Jungle.* Although hot weather kept the crowds away during the matinees, the big top was filled to capacity during three consecutive evening performances. According to *The Billboard,* "the Clyde Beatty act was a magnet that drew big crowds.[73]

Unlike the thrilling drama seen in *The Big Cage,* the lions and tigers in *The Lost Jungle* film were described by one critic as looking "like overfed house cats." The far-fetched story included a shipwreck, the crash of a dirigible, buried treasure and a lost civilization.

Clyde, who appeared as himself in the film, took it all in stride. Despite the contrived plot, the critic for *The New York Times* acknowledged that the lions and tigers "are very real" and predicted, "the children will sit through it twice."[74]

In the early 1930s, Beatty was featured during the indoor dates of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in New York and Boston. Edward Kelty's panoramic view from 1934 shows the safety cage as well as equestrian director Fred Bradna keeping a watchful eye on the performance.

Heroics that mirrored those seen in Beatty's films came to life in early August when the real Clyde Beatty was credited with rescuing four men whose boat was adrift in the swirling Niagara River near the circus lot in Buffalo, New York.

Clyde and Harriet had been spending their Sunday afternoon fishing when they saw the small rowboat being swept into dangerous waters. Clyde quickly grabbed a rope and was able to toss it to one of the men on the boat. He then dragged the men to safety and disappeared before those who were nearby were even aware of what could have been a tragedy.[75]

Whether the tickets were sold in a movie theatre or a circus wagon one of those who was convinced of Beatty's draw was Jess Adkins, manager of the Ringling-owned Hagenbeck-Wallace. In the fall of 1934, Adkins resigned from the Ringling organization and partnered with Zack Terrell, another former executive from the American Circus Corporation. Together Adkins and Terrell framed America's first new railroad circus in many years. They named it Cole Bros. World Toured Shows and they chose Clyde Beatty as their featured attraction.

As soon as Beatty agreed to join the new circus he was faced with a monumental task. Although he had differences with Ringling management, they owned all of the animals that he presented on Hagenbeck-Wallace. That meant that if he were to appear with the new Cole Bros. circus, he would have to locate, purchase and train a large group of lions and tigers for an entirely new act, and it had to be done by early January when the indoor dates began.

Many of the new cats were acquired at the Los Angeles Zoo and shipped to the new Cole Bros. winter quarters just north of Peru in Rochester, Indiana. Meanwhile, as Beatty was tracking down lions and tigers, Adkins and Terrell were buying railroad cars and wagons, as well as elephants, horses and all of the trappings needed for a new circus. They were able to acquire most of what they needed from animal dealer William P. Hall, former circus owner George Christy and others.

After Beatty assembled the lions and tigers in Rochester, he began putting the animals through a crash course where they learned to sit on their pedestals and also form a pyramid, two impressive visuals that had been part of the act on both Ringling and Hagenbeck-Wallace.

With the annual Detroit opener only weeks away, the Shrine's longtime manager, Eddie Stinson, traveled to Rochester to watch the rehearsals. While there he asked Clyde whether the act would include a rollover tiger – the climax of the act that he had presented on Hagenbeck-Wallace and a trick that Beatty had been practicing.

Beatty said that the rollover was a difficult trick to teach as the tiger must totally trust the trainer. "His main concern is what he cannot see," Beatty explained as he talked about the vulnerability the tiger feels as he exposes his belly to the

other cats in the arena. "The animal doing this solo on the floor never ceases to be wary, but in time the extreme nervousness passes…."

Although Beatty did not know for certain whether he would have the rollover tiger in time for the opening, on January 22 a reporter for the *Detroit News* took a photo of Beatty with the tiger during a training session in Rochester.[76] Beatty later said that it was Eddie Stinson's encouragement that motivated him to work day-and-night training the new cats.[77]

On February 4, 1935, Clyde Beatty presented his entirely new act in front of 11,000 people. The group of lions and tigers he had acquired and trained in less than three months "had the audience gasping."[78]

After he polished the new act at indoor circuses in Detroit, Cleveland and Indianapolis, the new Cole Bros.-Clyde

Products such as Malt-O-Meal cereal seized on the promotional value of Clyde Beatty and offered booklets and other premium items in exchange for proof of purchase box tops.

Beatty Circus opened a 16-day stand on April 20 at the Chicago Coliseum on the city's southside. On the exact same day of the Cole Bros. debut, the Ringling-owned Hagenbeck-Wallace & Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus opened at the Chicago Stadium. General manager Samuel Gumpertz was among those on hand at the Stadium.[79]

The same Hagenbeck-Wallace lions and tigers that Clyde Beatty had worked only a few months prior, were now presented by Bert Nelson who had previously been with the Ringling-owned Al G. Barnes show.

Perhaps in hopes of confusing the public, enormous posters of Beatty that had been printed the previous season were plastered on fences and walls as though he was again appearing with Hagenbeck-Wallace at the Stadium, even though he was actually appearing across town with Cole Bros.[80]

The competition between the two shows was big news in the circus world, and mid-way through the Chicago engagement the reputation of Cole Bros. was given a lift when Clyde's photo appeared on the cover of *The Billboard.*

The publicity was not as positive a few weeks later when an agent for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals appeared on the circus lot in Buffalo, New York and warned Beatty that if he did not stop "uncalled-for prodding and beating of the lions and tigers" the society would prosecute him "the same way we do a peddler caught unmercifully beating his horse."

In response, Beatty invited the SPCA representative to "come into the cage and pet my kitties if he thinks they are so tame." Whether it was a publicity stunt or not, the controversy made headlines and the names of Cole Bros. and Clyde Beatty were splashed across newspapers throughout upstate New York.[81]

The first tour of the new circus was a success, and by the end of the season Harriet had expressed an interest in also working with the big cats.

Before she could begin rehearsing a new act, Beatty returned to Hollywood where he filmed another 15-episode serial titled *Darkest Africa.* In this picture Beatty had to find "The Goddess of Joba," and rescue her from the clutches of a "high priest." The movie also introduced 12-year-old Manuel King to the public. The youngster was billed as "the world's youngest animal trainer."

Manuel King's father, William "Snake" King (Lieberman), was a wild animal dealer and trainer in Brownsville, Texas, and when a litter of four lions were born on his property, King hired Beatty's mentor "Chubby" Guilfoyle to put together an act for his nine-year-old son.

Guilfoyle said he observed some of the same traits that he had seen ten years before when he had started working with Clyde. "I knew right away that the boy was good with animals," he told a reporter.[82] The pinnacle of Manuel King's career as a wild animal trainer was co-starring with Beatty in *Darkest Africa,* however he continued to work in the carnival and circus business until his death in 2016 at the age of 92.[83]

When Beatty returned from Hollywood, he and the Cole Bros. elephant boss Eddie Allen began working on Harriet's act, a display where an elephant named Anna Mae would carry a lion named Simba and a tiger named Primba on her back.[84]

Beatty said it was the most difficult trick he had ever attempted.[85]

Clyde and Harriet Beatty were both featured performers on the Cole Bros. Circus when this photograph was taken in 1937.

The stunt required Simba and Prima to stay still as the elephant lumbered its way around the circus ring. The cats were taught the trick by standing on a platform placed on top of a small car covered with canvas. Once the cats were on the platform the car was rolled around the arena simulating the movement of an elephant.

As the lion and tiger were learning to ride the "mechanical elephant," the real Anna Mae was taken to the barn where the tigers and lions were kept so that she could become accustomed to their smell and remain calm when the two cats jumped onto her back.

The combination of these three natural enemies of the jungle immediately made headlines, and when Cole Bros. opened at the Chicago Stadium on April 11, 1936, Harriet Beatty presented the act in public for the first time. Although the lion was dropped in 1938 and other tigers eventually replaced Simba, Harriet and Anna Mae presented the spectacular display for the rest of her life.[86]

Part of the excitement during the act happened when the cats would leap through a burning hoop before they landed on the elephant's back. Shortly after the act was added to the program, Simba the lion got caught in the burning hoop and suddenly the elephant blanket was on fire. "I did not know what to do," Harriet recalled. She could not get the cats down and she was concerned about the elephant. "I thought, 'there goes the whole cage, the arena and the people.'"

Ernestine Clark, who was 16 at the time, picked up the story. "You should have seen Clyde," she said. "He was across the arena and into the cage before anyone knew what was happening or how dangerous it was. He shot those cats through their tunnel into their cages and had everything in order. He is wonderful. We all respect his courage."[87]

That courage extended outside of the arena where Beatty occasionally sparred with animal activists. When Cole Bros. was in Pittsburgh on May 26, 1936, the Humane Society swore out a complaint charging him with cruelty to animals, and when the matinee performance ended Clyde was arrested along with his assistant William Bernardi.

The complaint centered on Beatty's "whip-cracker" as well as the blanks that he fired during the performance. "If I fired a gun into the animals face the way they said I did, it would put their eyes out," Clyde told the judge. "The whip does not hit the animal," he added.

Although he emphatically denied the charge, he did plead guilty and paid a $20 fine.[88]

After two very successful seasons, the 1937 edition of Adkins and Terrell's circus crisscrossed the nation, starting at the New York Hippodrome where the Cole Bros. engagement overlapped with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey at Madison Square Garden. It was the first time in many years that two major circuses were in Manhattan at the same time.

During the New York engagement, Beatty was again arrested and charged with animal cruelty. The complaint came from Jacob Jacobs, an inspector for the Humane Society of New York. Jacobs testified that he had seen Beatty in the cage with a whip and had observed what "might have been" welts on the backs of some of the animals. He also testified that he saw a helper who "prodded the animals with a pole."

Beatty's attorney then asked if the trainer could take the stand to defend himself, but before he did the magistrate dismissed the case as not having any merit. As Clyde was

During the 1930s, Beatty was occasionally targeted by animal activists. This photograph was snapped at the moment that a New York City magistrate exonerated him of charges leveled by the Humane Society.

leaving the courtroom, he told reporters that any marks on the animals may have been caused by fights the animals had among themselves. He also said that he would welcome Mr. Jacobs into the cage at any time if he wanted to demonstrate "the proper way" to handle lions and tigers.[89]

The press that Beatty received from both the circus and motion pictures had made him a household name, as a result Clyde secured more advertisers and endorsements. One of the first was with Studebaker automobiles, a company based in South Bend, Indiana, only 50 miles from Cole Bros. winter quarters.

Several Studebakers were carried on the circus train in 1937, and advertisements were placed in national magazines that showed Beatty posing with a full-grown lion and tiger on the roof of the car. In one ad Beatty was asked how he spent his free time. He said that he really did not have any hobbies, "…except to drive my Studebaker…that's what I call real relaxation!"[90]

Clyde Beatty was not the only Hollywood star who traveled with Cole Bros. in 1937. Ken Maynard, a former wild west performer who had appeared in films as early as 1923, was also featured on the show. When the circus arrived in Los Angeles, the motion picture community turned out in full force on the lot at the corner of Washington and Hill streets.

From California the route turned east, and after a season that covered more than 16,000 miles the circus returned to winter quarters in Rochester, Indiana where Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell announced that business had been so good in 1937 that they were planning a second unit. It would be titled Robbins Bros.

The 1938 Cole Bros. season opened again at the Chicago Stadium where an observer wrote that Beatty appeared with 43 lions and tigers in the arena, "the largest number of cats ever used in an act of its kind." The review also praised Clyde's showmanship and Harriet's performance with Anna Mae, Primba and Simba.[91]

Two years after Clyde had first appeared on the cover of *The Billboard,* he was pictured again, this time with Harriet, now a featured performer in her own right.

Although the country had been pulling itself out of The Great Depression during the mid-1930s, a recession hit in 1938 as industrial production declined and 20-percent of the population was unemployed. The impact on outdoor entertainment was almost immediate.

In a mere matter of weeks, the new Tim McCoy Wild West closed, along with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Downie Bros. and the Tom Mix Circus. Cole Bros. was not immune to economic pressures, and on August 3 it too closed in Bloomington, Illinois.

Most of the Cole Bros. train returned to winter quarters, but some of the acts, including Clyde and Harriet Beatty, were sent to Bluefield, West Virginia where they joined Robbins Bros., the second unit that Adkins and Terrell had fielded in 1938.

At the end of the season, the Indiana Circus Corporation, owner of the Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus and Robbins Bros., was declared bankrupt. While Adkins and Terrell were able to reorganize the show in time for the season opener, the program did not include Clyde Beatty who had been with the circus since it launched.[92]

As part of his settlement with Cole Bros., Beatty received three elephants, along with the lions and tigers that he had worked since 1935. This small group of performing animals became the nucleus of acts that Clyde and Harriet presented at indoor circuses, fairs and other attractions.

With his ties to northern Indiana severed, Beatty decided his small menagerie might fare better in a sub-tropical climate. In early 1939 he purchased the McKillop Lion Farm in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and began remodeling the large tract of land into a tourist attraction that would be known as The Clyde Beatty Jungle Zoo.[93]

The Jungle Zoo was envisioned as an early theme park where winter visitors would watch Clyde and Harriet rehearse in a large steel arena. Tourists could also ride elephants and view other wild animals on display at the outdoor zoo.[94]

As the property was being remodeled, Beatty took his lions, tigers and elephants to Atlantic City where Clyde and Harriet were featured at George Hamid's Million Dollar Pier. That summer the couple performed each day and

HAMID-MORTON CIRCUS Featuring CLYDE BEATTY
CLYDE BEATTY GREATEST WILD ANIMAL TRAINER OF ALL TIME - IN A SINGLE-HANDED COMBAT WITH 40 MAN-EATING LIONS AND ROYAL BENGAL TIGERS.
BINGHAMTON STOW FLATS CIRCUS GROUNDS
Auspices: KALURAH SHRINE TEMPLE
6 · DAYS & NIGHTS · 6
—COMMENCING—
MONDAY JULY 1
TWICE DAILY 2 AND 8 P.M.

Clyde Beatty had a long relationship with producers George Hamid and Bob Morton. In the summer of 1940, Hamid and Morton took their indoor circus under canvas and Beatty's act was the featured attraction.

Clyde conducted a school for wild animal trainers. The Atlantic City booking lead to a long association with circus producers George Hamid and Bob Morton.

Although the Beattys did not tour with any outdoor circus in 1939, they still had plenty of work. When the engagement at the Million Dollar Pier ended, Clyde and Harriet were booked on several Shrine circuses presented by Hamid and Morton. When they were in Baltimore Clyde's act was described as the largest animal display ever presented in the city, and "in itself an evening's entertainment."[95]

The indoor dates proved to be lucrative. Depending on his proximity to other bookings, Beatty charged promoters $1,500 a week [$30,000 in 2021]. The booking included his big cat act with 26 lions and tigers, Harriet Beatty's tiger-riding elephant, an aerial act and the three performing elephants he had acquired when he left Cole Bros. The sponsor also had to pay for feeding the animals and transporting them from the railroad yards to the indoor arena.[96]

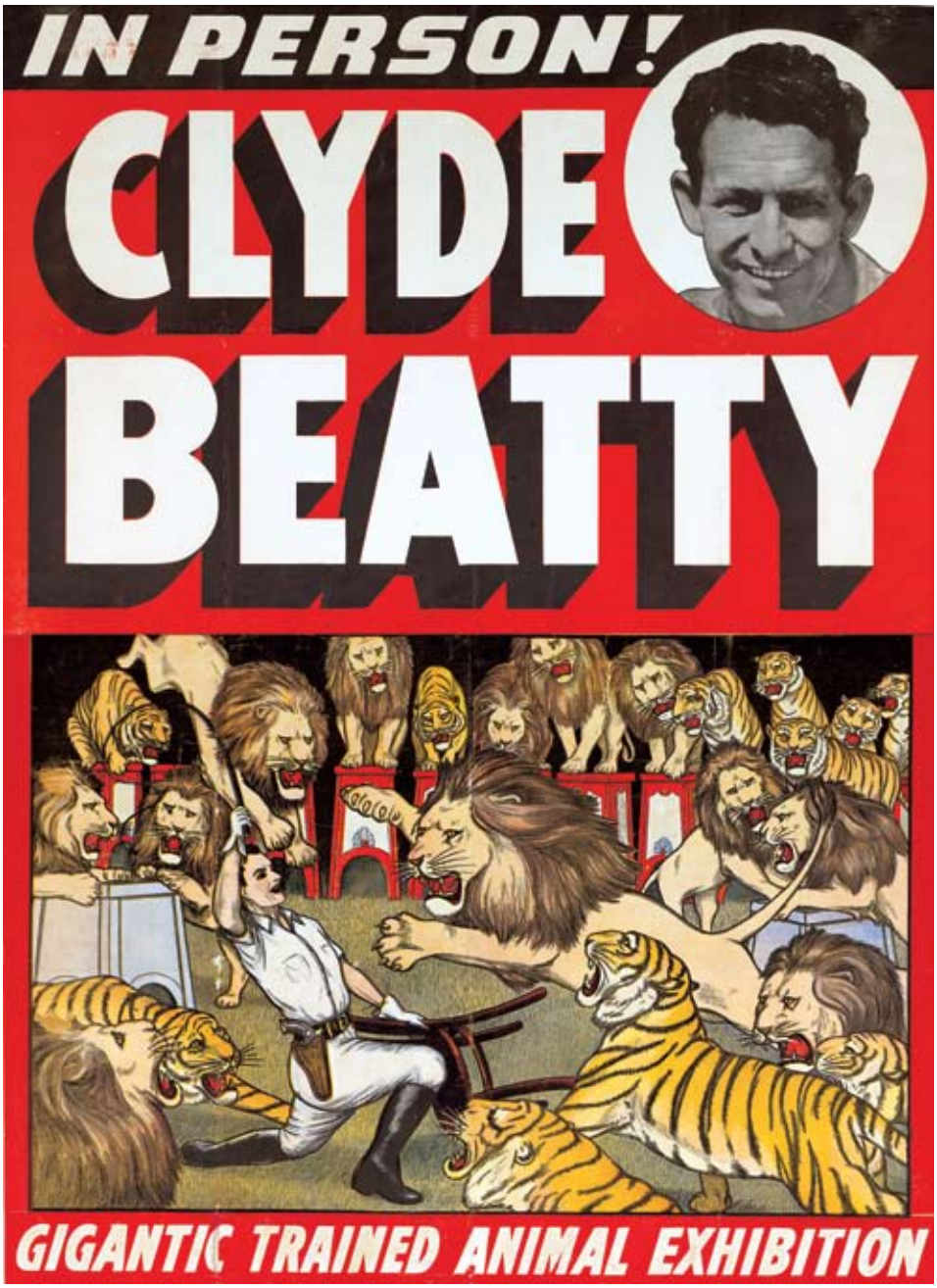
The winter of 1940 began with the Beattys' usual winter dates including circuses booked by Hamid-Morton in Montreal and Altoona. While the show was at the Milwaukee Auditorium, Clyde contracted the flu and Harriet stepped in and performed the big act.[97]

The Clyde Beatty Jungle Zoo opened in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 1941. Although the tourist attraction closed a few years later, in 1960 Beatty opened Jungleland in North Miami.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

The success the Beattys had with George Hamid and Bob Morton continued into the summer of 1940 when the "Hamid-Morton Circus Featuring Clyde Beatty" appeared under canvas in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. The tented circus appeared under the auspices of local fraternal organizations and also featured Lee Powell, "The Original Lone Ranger." It was Clyde Beatty's first tour with a motorized circus.

When the season ended, the couple returned to Fort Lauderdale where the Jungle Zoo was gearing up for



Beatty operated a small circus at the end of the midway of the Johnny Jones railroad carnival in 1941 and 1942.

the winter season. At the same time Clyde Beatty was planning to take out his first circus.

The Clyde Beatty Wild Animal Circus of 1941 was a featured attraction with the Johnny J. Jones railroad carnival.

The Jones carnival had the usual rides and sideshows, and at the end of the midway a big top was set up. Each day three 50-minute circus performances were presented in one ring as well as the steel arena where Clyde and Harriet presented their wild animal acts. The show also included the three Beatty elephants presented by Eugene "Arky" Scott, Albert Fleet with the Beatty chimpanzees, Harriet's sister Jean Evans who performed as an aerialist, along with "Kinko the Contortionist Clown."

Another attraction on the Jones carnival was Lucky Teeter, known for his Hell Driver auto thrill show. Before the show arrived in a new town, newspapers promoted the fact that the two daredevils – Beatty and Teeter – would switch places during the carnival. First Lucky would join Clyde in his cage filled with lions and tigers and later Beatty would join Teeter as the two drove a car up a ramp and through a flaming wall loaded with dynamite. Neither of them particularly liked the idea, but it did draw customers to the fairgrounds.[98]

Although the Fort Lauderdale Jungle Zoo attracted tourists each winter, it was not practical to keep it open when temperatures began to rise each spring. Shortly after the United States entered World War II, Beatty arranged to lease the Jungle Zoo name and some of the animals to the Summit Beach Park in Akron, Ohio. In the summer of 1942 Clyde Beatty's Akron Zoo included lions, tigers and leopards, along with bears, monkeys and an elephant.

While Beatty was in Akron negotiating the deal in early 1942, he registered for the draft, as all men of his age were required to do. The woman who filled out the paperwork later told how she was taken aback when she asked the young man where he worked and he replied, "In wild animal cages."[99]

The Clyde Beatty Wild Animal Circus was back on the Johnny J. Jones midway in 1942, but because of the urgent need for defense plants, the Jones winter quarters in DeLand, Florida was requisitioned by the government so that a glider factory could be built on the property. In addition, the big top that had been used on the carnival was also seized and used to protect an assembly line built on the site.[100]

In the winter of 1943, Beatty was back on the indoor circuit booked by Hamid and Morton. When the show was at Washington, D.C.'s Uline Arena Beatty's act was described as "whip-snapping and gun-shooting excitement" as the now-veteran trainer, "made fierce lions and tigers act like kittens."[101]

Despite manpower shortages and rationing, most circuses were profitable during World War II, and in 1943 the Beattys joined Ray Rogers' Wallace Bros. The expanded truck show was titled Clyde Beatty and Wallace Bros. Circus

THE ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURES OF...
CLYDE BEATTY
OCTOBER No. 1
84 GIANT PAGES
PDC
25c
LIVE ACTION scenes from the motion picture thriller "PIT OF UMANGI"
. . . plus "FLOATING JUNGLE"— "TAMED KILLERS"—
"THE CLAW and the CLOWN" . . . and many more exciting stories

The Clyde Beatty brand was marketed not only on circus day, but throughout the year. Comic books that told of the brave animal trainer and his adventures started appearing on newsstands in 1937 and continued to be produced until 1949.

Combined.

The circus opened the season April 17 in Pulaski, Virginia and traveled for 26 weeks, closing in Wilmington, North Carolina on October 15. The show appeared in many small towns that would have typically been skipped because the Office of Price Administration, which issued ration cards, required that truck circuses travel no further than 100 miles before stopping for a performance.[102]

The act presented by Clyde Beatty during the mid-1940s was memorialized by John Carruth who attended the Beatty-Wallace circus in Memphis, Tennessee and described the act that included some 20 lions and tigers.

"They circled the ring, spitting defiance as sounds of low growling swelled until the sharp crack of a whip seemed as light as the pop of a cork," he wrote, describing how the cats sped around the ring and "the cage became so lost in black and yellow that the white-shirted trainer was almost lost in the maze of color."

The description continued, "…a big cat melted down from a stool and advanced with terrible grace toward the comparatively puny figure of her master…then strangely, the battle of nerves was over and the beast suddenly wilted."[103]

At the end of the 1943 season, Clyde and Harriet moved to California where they joined the Russell Bros. Circus that Art Concello had purchased the previous year. According to Concello, Beatty had approached him about the partnership. Concello said that he told Beatty that he would use his act and name and give him a percentage of the profits at the end of the season.[104]

The Clyde Beatty-Russell Bros. Circus premiered in Santa Ana, California on March 20 with Albert Fleet's trained lion act opening the show. Harriet Beatty and the tiger riding elephant appeared as display number six, and a few minutes later Clyde Beatty made his grand entrance with "the finest collection of jungle-bred trained wild ani-

This impressive billing stand promoted Clyde Beatty's new circus during the 1945 season, shortly after he purchased Wallace Bros. with money he earned in partnership with Art Concello.

mals ever assembled."

The tour of the west coast was highlighted by a 24-day run in Los Angeles, and when the show closed Beatty told Concello that he planned to start his own circus in 1945.

Nearly 30 years later Concello told historian Tom Parkinson that he had paid Beatty $130,000 at the end of the 1944 season, and Beatty used that money to buy the Wallace Bros. truck show from Ray Rogers.[105]

Ray Rogers had started his first circus in 1927 and had successfully weathered The Depression with both Barnett Bros. and Wallace Bros. Beatty no doubt discussed the purchase when he and Harriet appeared in Mexico as part of a holiday show produced by Rogers and veteran circus manager Howard Y. Bary. Circo Americano was held outdoors at the National Stadium in Mexico City and featured the Beattys and their big cats, as well as the Cristiani family, Con Colleano and the Pallenberg Bears. Over 25,000 people saw the show on New Year's Day 1945.[106]

Shortly after Beatty returned to the United States he closed on the deal, and the new Clyde Beatty Circus opened in Rock Hill, South Carolina on April 7. Like other outdoor entertainment during the final year of World War II, Beatty's truck show prospered as it toured the east coast and Midwest. At the end of the season, Beatty sold the trucks to Floyd King and bought controlling interest in Concello's Russell Bros. Pan Pacific Circus, a railroad show that traveled on 15 cars.

The new Clyde Beatty Railroad Circus used many of the wagons and cars that Concello had acquired from the Beckmann and Gerety railroad carnival a year before. The equipment was spruced up at winter quarters in El Paso, Texas, and when the show opened on March 23, 1946 the crowd was so large that extra performances were necessary.

"It was the most enthusiastic opening I have ever seen," Beatty said after the third show.[107] That first tour of the Beatty railroad circus covered more than 14,000 miles over 21 weeks. The season closed on October 16 in Brunswick, Georgia and moved to winter quarters in Nacogdoches, Texas.

Clyde was performing at the Arabia Shrine Circus in Houston when he confirmed to *The Billboard* that he had purchased Concello's remaining share of the circus and would be the sole owner of the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1947.[108]

As soon as the show opened it was dogged by weeks of bad weather, and on July 8 a train derailment tossed eight cars off the track. When the season closed in Beaumont, Texas on October 27, the train was shuttled to Shreveport where the circus wintered at the Louisiana State Fairgrounds.

Even before the show arrived at quarters there were reports that Beatty would be returning to Hollywood at the end

Huge crowds frequently jammed the midway when the Clyde Beatty Circus opened its season in Southern California as was the case when this picture was taken in 1949.

of the season. He was hired along with Frank Buck to appear in an Abbott and Costello comedy titled *Africa Screams*.

The film opened in the spring of 1949 to lackluster reviews and one critic described it as, "A typical Abbott and Costello comedy, with the principals cavorting about in the African jungles. Clyde Beatty and Frank Buck are included in the cast, although their contributions amount to little."[109] Nevertheless, the film provided additional promotion for the circus.

In January of 1949, Beatty upgraded his rolling stock when he purchased 20 steel wagons that had been built new for the Sparks Circus that James Edgar operated in 1947. Among the nearly new wagons were four cages for the cat act, and a ticket wagon that would continue to be used by the Beatty show until well into the 1990s.

Word of the new equipment was overshadowed by the fact that Beatty would be shipping his lions and tigers to Hawaii for a four-week winter tour of the islands promoted by E. K. Fernandez.[110] When the show opened under canvas in

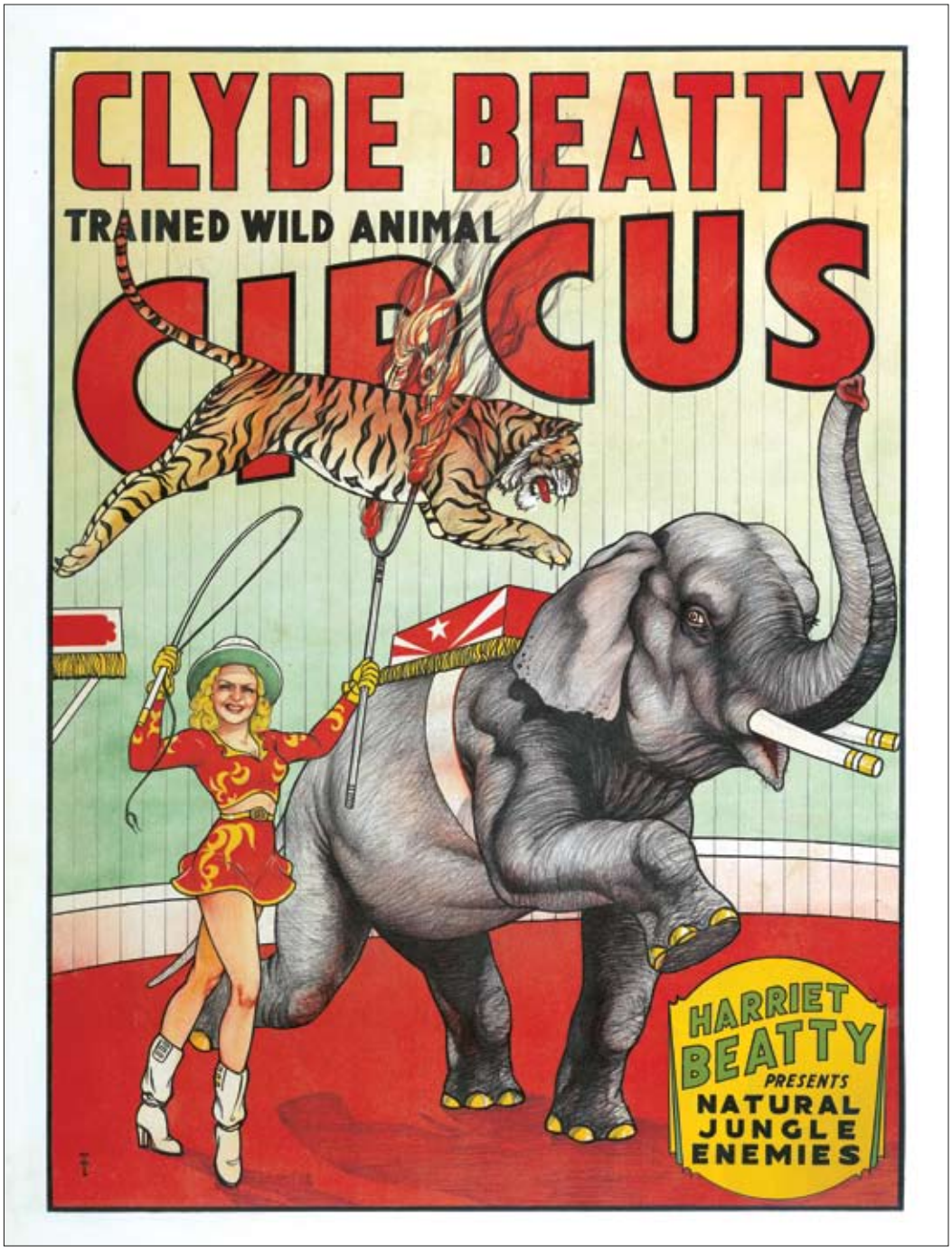
Clyde and Harriet Beatty were married from 1933 until her death in 1950. Although they did not have children together, her daughter Albina often traveled with the circus and later had her own wild animal act which she presented as "Harriet Beatty, Jr."

Honolulu, Beatty was praised for his daring performance. "When he emerged from the steel arena he was drenched with sweat," a local newspaper reported, "and so was his audience."[111] It was the first of several trips that Beatty would make to Hawaii.

The 1949 railroad season began in El Monte, California on March 24, and among those on the show was Dorothy Herbert, who Sam Gumpertz had promoted as Clyde Beatty's replacement 15 years before. Clyde and Dorothy had worked together not only on Ringling, but also on Cole Bros. and the big Shrine dates. Years later she reflected on the friendship that she had with both Clyde and Harriet, and said, "Knowing them was one of the nicest memories of my life in show business."[112]

During the mid-1940s, Harriet developed a heart condition which led to surgery and long periods of hospitalization. She had not been feeling well during much of the 1950 season and she rarely worked the elephant and tiger act.[113]

After being hospitalized for several days in mid-October, Harriet Beatty died in the couple's private railroad car during the matinee performance in Kosciusko, Mississippi on October 25. She was 41 years old.



Harriet Beatty's tiger-riding elephant became her trademark. After her death in 1950, the act was briefly presented by equestrienne Dorothy Herbert.

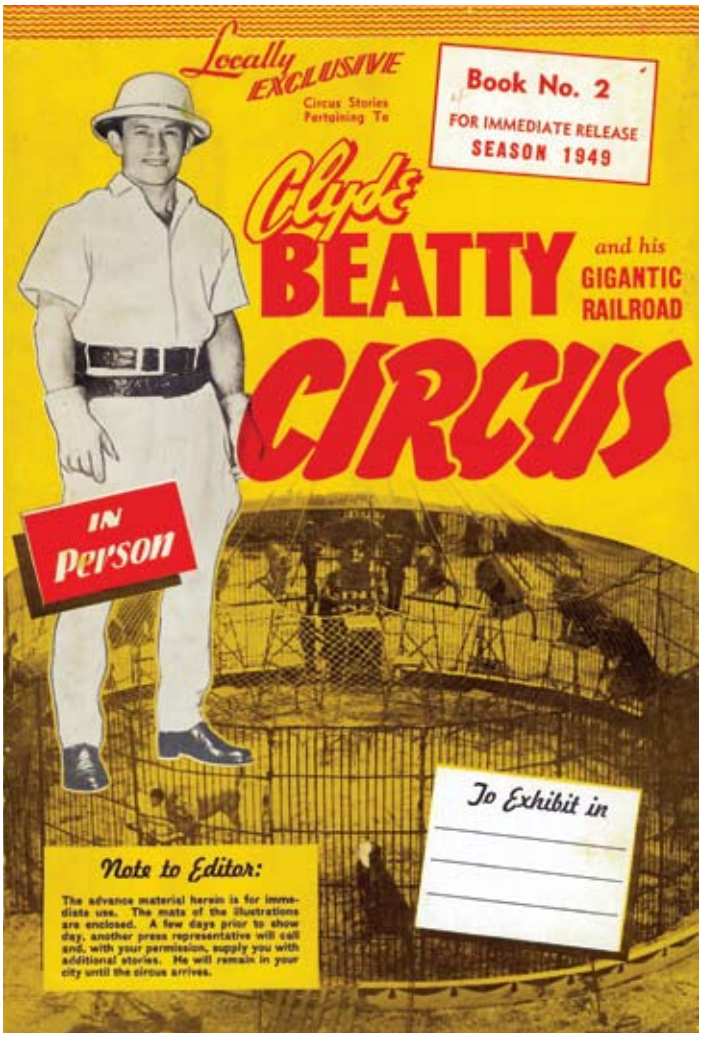
The performance that night was cancelled as well as the next day's stand in Grenada. Clyde was stunned by Harriet's sudden death, and for the last ten days of the 1950 season his assistant Joe Arcaris worked the act.

Harriet was buried in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where she and Clyde had operated their Jungle Zoo until 1945.

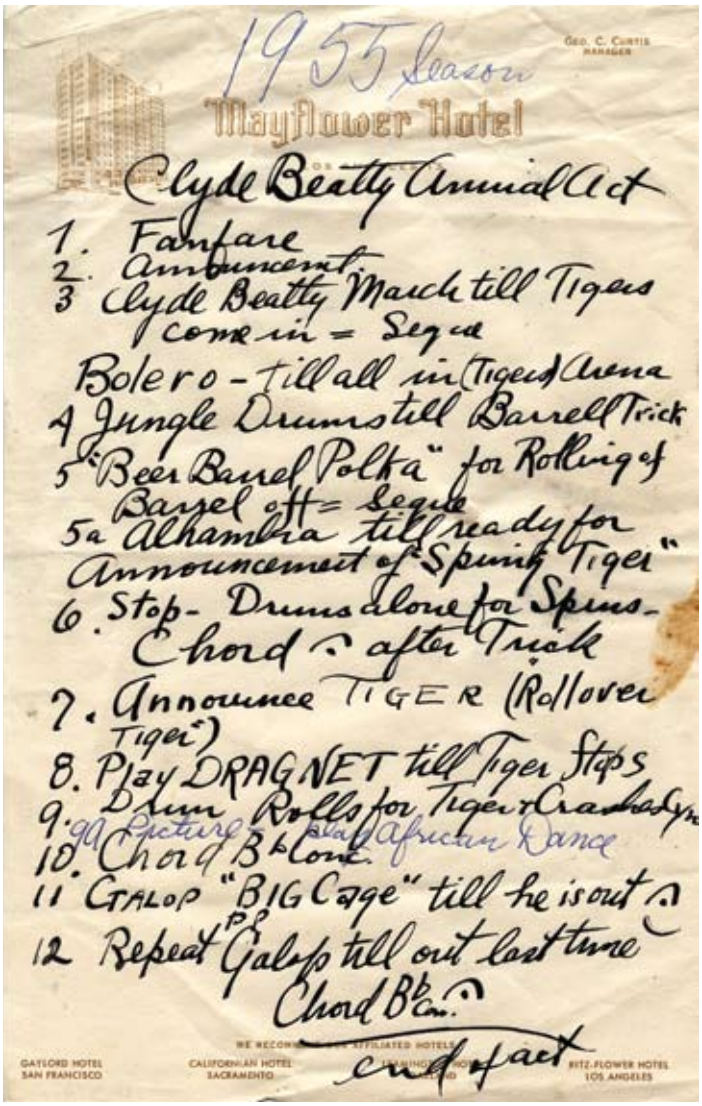
A few months before Harriet Beatty died, *The Clyde Beatty Show* began airing over the Mutual Radio Network. In 1950 there were only about six million televisions in the United States, and radio was still a major source of household entertainment.

The Clyde Beatty radio show ran for two years, and during that time 52 episodes were produced. The character of Clyde was played by actor Vic Perrin and Eve McVeagh played the part of Harriet. Although the real Harriet Beatty had died shortly after the show premiered, she continued as a major character on the program.

Like everything associated with Beatty, the radio show was packed with adventure. Some of the thirty-minute programs took the listener on safaris while others were set on the circus lot. Whenever a scene took place under the big top, it was accompanied by recordings of Merle Evans and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus band.[114]


Locally EXCLUSIVE
Circus Stories Pertaining To
Book No. 2
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEASON 1949
Clyde BEATTY
and his
GIGANTIC RAILROAD
CIRCUS
IN Person
To Exhibit in
Note to Editor:
The advance material herein is for immediate use. The mats of the illustrations are enclosed. A few days prior to show day, another press representative will call and, with your permission, supply you with additional stories. He will remain in your city until the circus arrives.

Clyde Beatty was a household name and stories of his exploits were carried from coast-to-coast.


1955 Season
Mayflower Hotel
Clyde Beatty Annual Act
1. Fanfare
2. Announcement
3 Clyde Beatty March till Tigers come in = Segue
Bolero - Till all in Tiger Arena
4 Jungle Drums till Barrell Trick
5 "Beer Barrel Polka" for Rolling of Barrel off = Segue
5a Alhambra till ready for Announcement of Spring Tiger"
6. Stop - Drums alone for Spins - Chord after Trick
7. Announce TIGER (Rollover Tiger)
8. Play DRAG NET till Tiger Stops
9. Drum Rolls for Tiger Crash
9a Picture
10. Chord Bb Cm.
11 GALOP "BIG Cage" till he is out
12 Repeat Galop till out last time
Chord Bb Cm.
end of act

Bandmaster Victor Robbins made notes of the music and cues that he used during Beatty's act in 1955.

Although he mourned Harriet's passing, after the show went into winter quarters in Shreveport Beatty traveled to Detroit for his annual appearance at the big Shrine Circus. The 1951 date was remembered for two separate performances where a lion named Prince attacked tigers. During the first episode the tiger was killed. A few days later Prince seriously injured another. Beatty was distraught, but said, "It is one of those things that happens every now and then in this business."[115]

While Clyde was in Detroit, he took possession of a "Kaiser Safari," an automobile that had lion and zebra upholstery. He made many personal appearances that season at Kaiser dealerships along the route.

When the Detroit date ended, Beatty returned to Louisiana and offered the killer lion to the Shreveport Zoo, but the city's mayor Clyde Fant said no, "If the lion is too vicious for Clyde Beatty to handle, he is too vicious for Clyde Fant to handle," adding "I think it is mighty nice for Mr. Beatty to think of us, but I will definitely turn down his offer."[116]

It was also while he was in Shreveport that Clyde met a young singer named Jane Abel who was performing at the Washington-Youree Hotel. The romance quickly blossomed and when the circus was in Bellingham, Washington on June 30 Clyde and Jane were married. When they arrived on the lot after the ceremony, Victor Robbins and the circus band serenaded the newlyweds with "Here Comes the Bride" as performers showered the couple with rice.[117]

Robbins had a long association with Beatty, and in 1935 he was among the former employees of the American Circus Corporation who moved to the new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus. As bandmaster for the new show, he had led that band as it played *The Big Cage,* a galop that veteran composer Karl L. King had dedicated to Beatty the previous year. In 1951, composer Albert Glassier wrote "The Clyde Beatty March," which Robbins immediately added to the score.[118]

At the end of the 1951 season, the circus began wintering just east of Los Angeles in the suburb of El Monte, where quarters were established at what had been Gay's Lion Farm at Peck Road and Valley Boulevard.

For the next several seasons the show premiered in Southern California, and in the early 1950s while the circus was set up at the corner of Washington and Hill streets in Los Angeles, a 15-year-old African American teenager was offered a job to help as a cage boy. "I thought it was some

The mystery Ring of Fear *was filmed in 1952 on location on the Clyde Beatty railroad circus. The story is set on the show and the picture stars Beatty as well as writer Mickey Spillane and Pat O'Brien.*

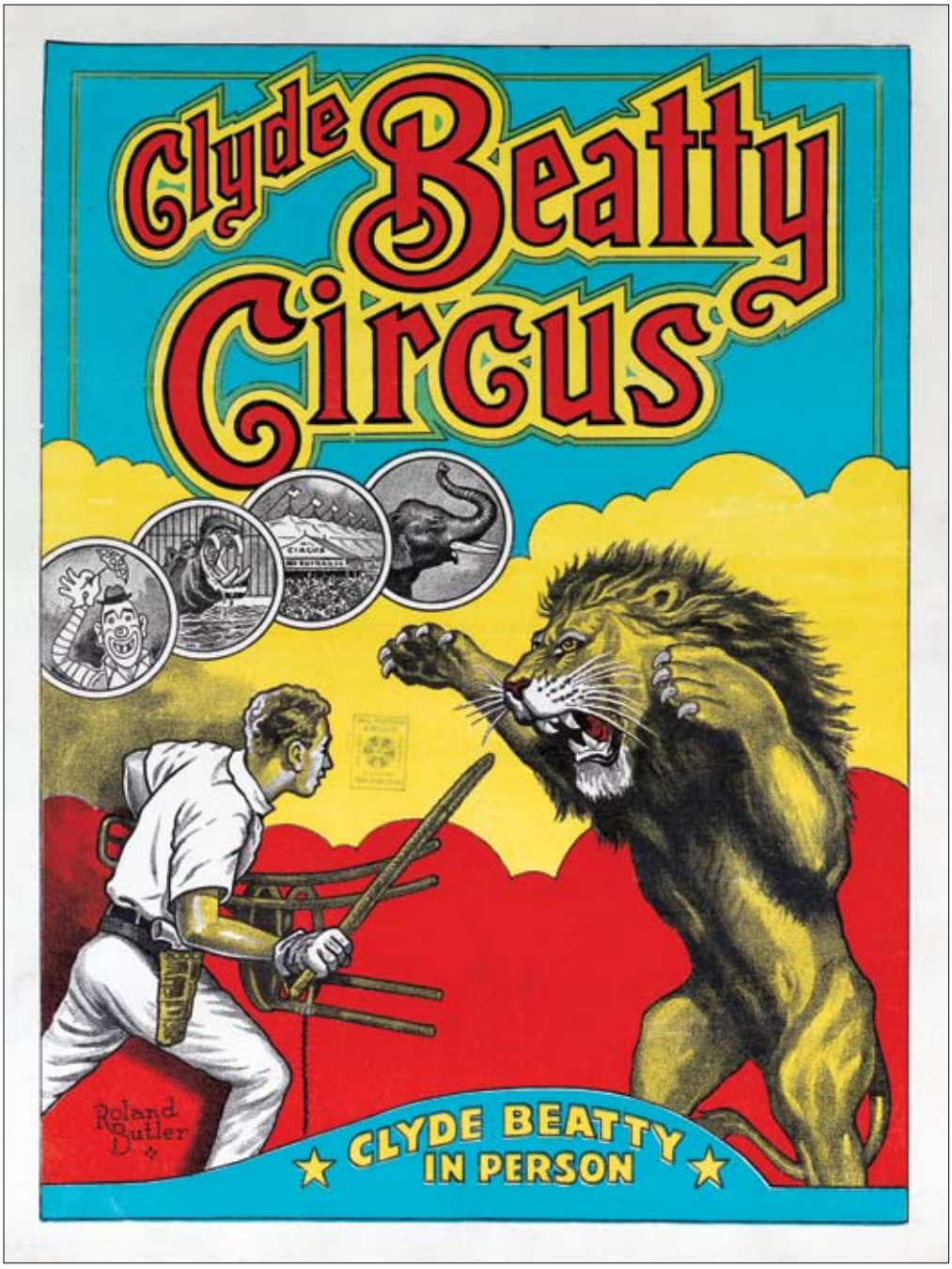
kind of a joke," Emmanuel Ruffin, Jr. said a decade after he started working with Beatty.

In the months that followed "Junior" Ruffin was hooked, and over the next several years he became one of several protégées, serving an apprenticeship that eventually led to him being the first Black wild animal trainer in the United States.[119]

During the 1952 season, Beatty again returned to Hollywood to film *Perils of the Jungle,* a motion picture and television program where Clyde Beatty starred as a hunter who tracked down lions in the Congo. During his absence Joe Walch worked the act.

One of the big changes in 1952 was the replacement of the old wooden chutes used to shuttle the cats into the arena. From that point on steel chutes

Artist Forrest Freeland created several custom posters for the Clyde Beatty Circus. The original artwork for this poster is part of the Dave and Mary Jane Price Clyde Beatty Collection, located at Illinois State University's Milner Library.



Roland Butler's depiction of Clyde Beatty in action appeared on posters and programs for decades.

were used to transfer the lions and tigers into the ring.

During the last three weeks of the 1952 season, a Hollywood film crew joined the circus route as they filmed a Mickey Spillane mystery titled *Ring of Fear.* A special big top that included checkerboard trim and striped sidewalls was created for the motion picture.[120]

The premise of the movie was that the Clyde Beatty Circus was jinxed, again and again, falling victim to apparent accidents which were actually the work of a homicidal saboteur. The film featured Beatty and several other acts, along with the screen debut of mystery writer Mickey Spillane who arrived on the scene to solve the case.

The final scenes were filmed at the Arizona Fair Grounds in Phoenix on December 5 and 6. Shortly before cameras were scheduled to roll, a storm blew across the lot knocking down the menagerie and two other tents. The stars of the film, Mickey Spillane, Clyde Beatty and Pat O'Brien had stepped out of a trailer just as the winds hit. Spillane was injured by flying debris as were two of the locals who had been recruited as extras. Despite the damage, general manager Frank Orman, promised, "The show will go on and the folks will not even know we had a storm."[121]

The movie, which was produced by John Wayne, premiered at the Fox Theatre in Phoenix on July 2, 1954 and was widely panned. *The New York Times* said that the picture was "slow, contrived and often absurd," adding "both a fine title and a reputable circus were wasted."[t]

Three months after *Ring of Fear* was complete, *The Big Circus,* starring Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis was filmed at the same Phoenix fairgrounds where the Spillane movie had been shot. Although Beatty did not appear in the Martin and Lewis movie, his animals and equipment did.

As the number of television sets increased throughout the United States, Beatty endorsed the medium as a promotional tool. In several cities, TV cameras were on hand to record the set up on circus day. "We show just enough of the circus to give the public a taste," Beatty said. "The coverage has brought a noticeable improvement in attendance."[123]

Attendance was also bolstered by a street parade that was presented in a few cities in 1954, and when the show was in Tucson some 35,000 lined the streets in advance of the performance.[124] One of the highlights was a bandwagon that had originally been built for Norris & Rowe around 1905 that had been retrofitted with rubber tires. The parade wagons, along with a special motor home for Clyde titled "Safari," were driven from town to town while the rest of the equipment and personnel continued to travel by rail.

Despite the additional promotion, by early 1955 Clyde

Clyde Beatty opened the Jungleland tourist attraction in North Miami, Florida in 1960.

Beatty needed operating capital. After weeks of negotiation, controlling interest in the circus was purchased by Art Concello. Although Concello was now the boss, Beatty retained a share in the show and continued to appear as the star attraction. While *The Billboard* reported that "it was definite that Concello would conduct all business operations," the article also mentioned that Beatty had also sold Concello part of his wild animal act.[125]

In 1956, Duncan Renaldo, the actor who played The Cisco Kid on television, was added to the show, yet even with a character that children knew, the season was off to a dismal start and crowds failed to materialize. The show opened its traditional spring route in California, but on May 9 it was forced to close in Burbank and return to winter quarters in Deming, New Mexico.

At the time the circus shut down, it owed more than a $350,000 to creditors and had only $260 in the bank.[126]

The parent company that operated the show, the National Circus Corporation, filed for bankruptcy, and on June 12 Clyde Beatty told a judge in Macon, Georgia that despite his earlier endorsement of television as a promotional vehicle, it had actually delivered a powerful blow to traveling circuses.

During the bankruptcy proceedings, former Ringling executives Frank McClosky and Walter Kernan paid off Concello's claim and took over ownership of the show. After a free performance at the Deming, New Mexico winter quarters on August 29, the show resumed its tour and headed east. The final performance of the Clyde Beatty railroad circus was given in Sarasota on November 20, 1956. The train was then taken to DeLand where it was unloaded at the former Volusia County Fairgrounds, winter quarters for the show for the next 60 years.

In 1957, the circus transitioned from rail to roads and the Clyde Beatty truck show opened in DeLand before beginning a trek up the eastern seaboard. By mid-May the circus was playing a series of one-day stands on Long Island, New York, when Beatty made a live appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show.*

When Beatty arrived at the theatre on May 19, he complained that the stage was too small, and he would be forced to work too close to the lions and tigers. Still, the appearance had been heavily promoted and Sullivan insisted that the act go on.

Beatty's worst fears were realized when one of the lions charged him during the live broadcast. When it became clear that Beatty was losing control of the situation, Sullivan wandered into the seating and started introducing celebrities in the audience including actor Walter Brennan and jockey Eddie Arcaro. Meanwhile the audience at home heard, but did not see, lions roaring and Clyde repeatedly firing gunshots off camera. While Beatty was able to subdue the animals, Sullivan later called the appearance "the roughest act, I've ever featured."[127]

Beatty was back in New York the following spring when the big top was set up at Palisades Park, across the Hudson from Manhattan. The appearance of the Clyde Beatty Circus coincided with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's date at Madison Square Garden.

When Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. was in Philadelphia in 1961, Prince Rainier III of Monaco and Princess Grace met Beatty. They were accompanied by four-year-old Princess Caroline and her three-year-old brother Prince Albert. The next day, May 24, 1961, Prince Rainier and Princess Grace attended a White House luncheon hosted by President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy.

Former CHS President Tom Parkinson was on assignment for *The Billboard* when he saw the opening performance at Palisades Park, writing that Beatty's act, which featured 14 lions and tigers, was interrupted several times for applause. When referring to Beatty he wrote, "His showmanship remains tops, and the audience appreciates the fine performance."[128]

The Clyde Beatty Circus program also featured Emmett Kelly, wirewalker Josephine Berosini, Hugo Zacchini and aerialist Norma Fox.[129] LaNorma remembered Beatty as more than a performer. "He had an old-fashioned act, and though he looked tough he was very sweet with his pussycats," she said, adding, "if there was anything he could do to help anyone he would. He was a very good person."[130]

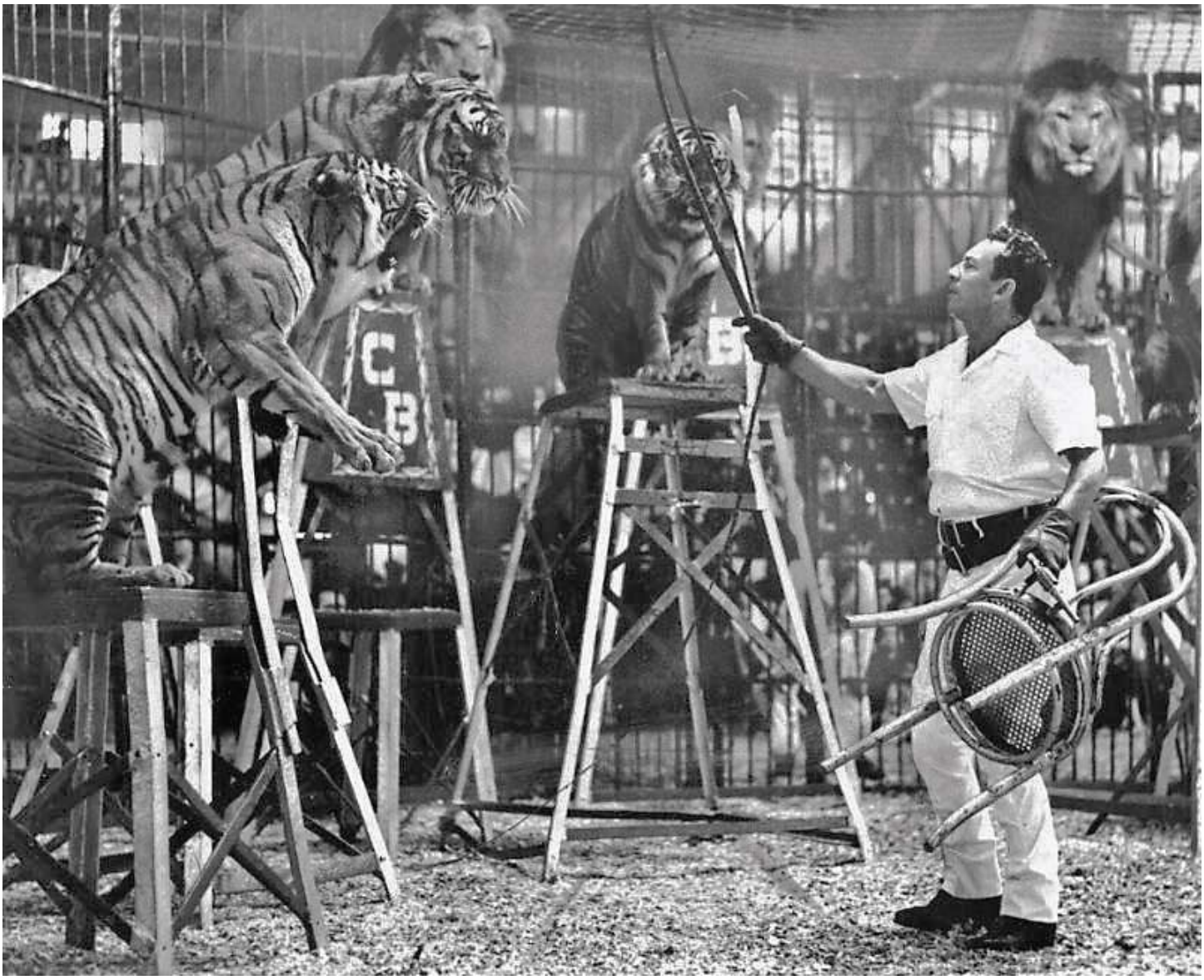
LaNorma worked with Beatty for many years and was on the program in 1959 when McClosky and Kernan added the dormant Cole Bros. title to their show and the circus was retitled as Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros.

When the first season of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. ended, a new tourist attraction opened in south Florida on a site where George Hamid had earlier operated "Aquafair." Clyde Beatty's Jungleland was located on U.S. Route 1 seven miles north of Miami and was stocked in part by circus owner D. R. Miller who provided both animals and equipment, including an elephant and camel along with a ring curb and elephant tubs.[131]

A few days after the attraction opened, Beatty was working his cats in the outdoor arena when he was temporarily blinded by the bright Florida sunshine. As he stumbled, one of the tigers took advantage of the situation and knocked a bamboo pole from his hands. According to spectators, Beatty was soon able to regain his balance "and the onlooking crowd breathed easier."[132]

Shortly after that incident, he returned to Hawaii for another winter appearance with E. K. Fernandez' circus in Honolulu. The show also featured wirewalker Con Colleano, the Wallenda high wire act, and The Flying Viennas, a flying return act that included as its catcher television actor David Nelson, son of Ozzie and Harriet.[133]

When Beatty was back in Honolulu the next February, a freak accident happened that nearly blinded him. According to Jane Beatty a young lion had rushed him, and as he raised his hand to crack his whip the end of the lash wrapped



Beatty's mastery of lions and tigers was apparent 35 years after he first took over the big animal act on Hagenbeck-Wallace.

around one of the bars of the cage and the stalk of the whip jammed into his eye.

"This blinded me, not only the right eye but also the left one as well. I couldn't see a thing," Clyde recalled. Beatty said he was concerned that the big cats would realize that he was incapacitated and attack him before he could make it to the safety cage. "Fortunately, they did not realize what was happening as they had not been cued off their pedestals for the final laydown trick," he said. "I was lucky to get out alive."[134]

Within a few weeks, Beatty was back with the circus for its opening indoors at the Long Island Arena in Commack, New York. According to the 1961 Route Book, Beatty "paced the show, even though he was slightly hampered by the eye injury."[135]

One of those who was working at the Long Island premiere was a stagehand apprentice named Chic Silber who operated a spotlight during the performance. Although Silber would later create props and design sets for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and other circuses, until that day he was focused on a career in the theatre. "The first time I saw him it was different than anything I had ever seen. He started it all for me," Silber recalled. "To me he was the one and only."[136]

From New York the circus traveled to Philadelphia for a nine-day engagement under the auspices of the LuLu Shrine Temple. While the show was set up at Lighthouse Field, Prince Rainer and Princess Grace of Monaco attended a performance along with their children Prince Albert and Princess Stephanie. Press Agent Howard Y. Bary arranged for photographers to capture the event and the photo appeared in newspapers nationwide.[137]

From Philadelphia the circus traveled to the suburbs of Washington, D.C., and while the show was in College Park, Maryland, Beatty accompanied circus fans Bill Pringle and David Orr to the National Zoo in Washington where they examined the only white tiger in the Western Hemisphere.

"We picked Clyde up and all went to the Zoo," Orr said as he recalled going into the cat house and seeing the rare animal. "He put his chin on his hands and gazed up at the tiger like a kid."[138]

The idea of acquiring a white tiger was a dream that Beatty talked about for the rest of his life, even describing how he would use it. "I would never allow him into the ring with the other cats," he once said. "But I would like to work out a special act with just the white tiger. That would be interesting."[139]

While Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. was preparing for an indoor engagement at the New York Coliseum in the winter of 1962, the veteran trainer appeared on the CBS game show *What's My Line*. When he walked on stage Beatty signed in as "Mr. X," as the producers correctly assumed that while the panel might not recognize his face, they would certainly know his name. After several questions Dorothy Kilgallen said with some exasperation, "If the general public knows your name, why are *we* so stupid?" The panel then bantered among themselves and correctly guessed that the contestant was Clyde Beatty.

After he was identified, host John Daly promoted his appearance in Manhattan and Beatty spoke of his early career. When Bennett Cerf asked whether his name was pronounced "BAY-tee" or "BEE-tee," he confirmed the pronunciation as "BAY-tee" to which Arleen Francis quipped, "unless a lion comes after him, then it is Clyde BITE-ee."[140]

By the mid-1960s, Jane was spending most of the circus season with their young son Clyde, Junior at their home in Ventura, California. According to Beatty, Jane never got used to his act. "She will not watch it," he once said. "She just cannot."[141]

When a reporter asked Beatty in 1963 whether his son would follow in his father's footsteps, the response was quick. "Clydie will not do it," he said. "I will not let him," adding, "I did not get an education. I surely wish I had gone to college. My boy will. You can bet on that."[142]

Clyde Beatty, Junior would later study art, yet like his father he thrived on adventure, and in the years that followed he became a world-renowned designer of surfboards.

Although Clyde Beatty, Jr.'s fame would come in a different arena, he remembered many of the things his father told him about the danger of working lions and tigers. "You do not tame them, you train them," he recalled. "You cannot take the fight out of them. You do not *want* to take the fight out of them."[143]

His father thrived on that battle and while Beatty was now middle-aged, his energy and command of the big cats was that of a man much younger, as a newspaper reporter who saw the performance in 1963 described:

> "Beatty entered the double door to the big cage where the lions were already on the prowl. On the highest perch in the pyramid was Buddy, then Pharoah and the brothers Sultan and Brutus. Leo entered followed by Simba, then King, Caesar and Congo, and last was Henry.
>
> "Now the five Bengal tigers entered, Sabre, Rajah, Prince, Princess and Frisco.
>
> "As Beatty clutched the back of an old-fashioned wooden kitchen chair he used three fingers of his left hand, the forefinger and thumb to fire a pistol filled with blank charges. In his right hand he held a buggy whip with a snapper end that was

Dave and Mary Jane Price first saw Clyde Beatty perform in 1943. In the years that followed, Price came to know the trainer, and in 1960 he joined Clyde-Beatty Cole Bros. working in both the elephant department and as a billposter.

harmless but made a tremendous cracking sound.

"As the music raced along, Beatty would bring Rajah down to a slow stalking walk, followed by a spinning lion. A tiger then walked on a huge roller making it across the ring. The tiger, Prince, then rolled over back-to-belly at Beatty's direction.

"Finally, the finale, getting the lions to lie down next to each other in a straight line.

"The applause was thunderous.

"Beatty wet with perspiration, exited and immediately wrapped himself in a huge robe and heavy towel."[144]

Clyde Junior recalled his father's theatrics. "When they would make a move, he would use the chair. That was his trademark," he said. "And the whip…he used to make his own whips. It was for the crack. The sound. He did not whip the animals. It would not do any good for a lion that size, it would just make them mad!"[145]

At the end of the 1963 season, *Amusement Business* reported that Beatty was looking for an apprentice. One of those who saw the article was a young man from Texas named Roger Smith who had idolized Beatty since he first saw him as a young child in 1947. After exchanging letters with his hero, he was hired and in early 1964 he reported to the lot in Philadelphia.

Smith learned that his responsibilities were to keep all of the props repaired and painted, including the guns and whips. He would also be responsible for looking after Clyde's wardrobe and boots, as well as driving his Cadillac and pulling his Airstream trailer. His pay would be $15.00 a week plus sleeping space and cookhouse privileges.[146]

When the circus was in Allentown, Pennsylvania on June 21, Smith drove Beatty to the home of his long-time friend Bob Good, Sr. where the two had been invited for dinner. Beatty and Good had known each other since the 1920s.

The two were such good friends that they would get together whenever the circus was in the vicinity of Allentown. "He would come to the house and stay with us," Bob, Jr. said. "He would kick his shoes off and sit there and read the paper. He also loved to soak in our bathtub."

One day in 1958, Beatty needed to have the caliber changed on some of his guns and while visiting the Goods he asked if there was anyone in Allentown who could do the work. Bob, Sr. sent his son with Clyde to the local gunsmith. Bob Good, Jr. picked up the story from there: "The two of us went to the gun shop and he said, 'I am Clyde Beatty.' " The owner of the shop seemed skeptical. "A couple of weeks later I had to go get the guns. The guy was so excited. He said, 'That really was Clyde Beatty! I saw him on television the other night!' "[147]

Several years later when Smith wheeled the white Cadillac up to the Good's Allentown home, their family doctor was there to meet them. According to Bob, Jr. the same doctor had examined Clyde during previous visits, but that night things were different. "After he met with the doctor he came back downstairs and started to eat," Roger Smith recalled. "He took one bite of mashed potatoes and it set him on fire so bad he put his fork down and rolled his eyes. He could not eat."

As the season progressed, Beatty became very ill with what was later diagnosed as cancer of the esophagus. "We would go into a Dairy Queen, and I would get a big milkshake with two raw eggs so that he could have some nourishment," Smith recalled.[148]

By the time the circus arrived in Rochester, Minnesota, Beatty could no longer function. He left the show the next day in Owatonna for the University of Chicago's Billings Hospital where surgeons removed two-thirds of his stomach.

The Clyde Beatty wild animal act, without the tigers that he had worked, was taken over by his assistant, Joseph "Red" Hartman, a cage boy who had first worked for Beatty in the early 1950s and returned to the show in 1961.

But Hartman was no Beatty, and during one of his first appearances with the act an observer said, "many believed that things might get out of hand at the end of the act." As the lions were leaving the cage, a fight broke out among three of the big cats. Hartman was unable to separate the lions and finally he "scurried out of the cage himself."[149]

Only a few days later, when the circus was in East Alton, Illinois, one of the lions knocked Hartman to the ground and slashed him with his big paw. Seven stitches were required to sew up the wound.[150]

As he was recovering from surgery, Beatty sent a telegram to circus general manager Frank Orman and asked if Roger Smith could pick up the Airstream trailer from where it had been left near Rochester, Minnesota and drive it to a trailer park in LaGrange, Illinois "where Jane can cook and get me back in shape."[151]

After Smith arrived in Chicago, he visited his ailing boss in his hospital room. Despite the fact that he was recuperating from a major operation, Beatty was keenly interested in what was happening on the show and how the audiences were accepting Red Hartman.

Although announcements were made at the performance that Beatty was "recovering from surgery for an ulcer," the circus advertising still promoted Clyde Beatty, and the expectation that the public would see him rather than Hartman was enough to warrant a critical editorial in the *Kokomo Morning Times*. The newspaper admonished the circus and said, "Did the advance man know that Beatty was not going to be there? Was the release of Beatty's pictures and stories merely a ticket-selling gimmick? The public and the newspapers deserve an answer."[152]

When the show was in Fort Lauderdale that October, a newspaper reporter also described his disappointment as he watched Hartman tackle the "impossible task" of replac-

ing Beatty. "Instead of confidence, grace and gentle handling of the big cats," he wrote, "Hartman charges through the ring throwing prodding poles at the cats to make them respond."

When the same reporter asked manager Frank Orman about what he believed was a lackluster performance, Orman said, "He takes too many chances. I have to threaten that I will not let him go into the ring."[153]

Beatty may have realized that the future of his act was uncertain when he took out magazine advertisements, including in *Bandwagon,* that offered five Bengal tigers for sale from $900 to $1,000 each.[154]

Still, he was not prepared to give up, and in mid-February 1965 the 61-year-old Beatty reported to winter quarters in DeLand and began exercising the cats for the start of the new season.

When the 1965 season opened at the Long Island Arena in Commack, New York, Beatty was there. While he remained on the show for nearly a month, the strain was too much. During one of those early performances, he was so weak that he collapsed in the cage. Press agent Arthur Bitters later said, "Luckily he fell over one of the gentler lions and they were able to get him out in time. It would have been a different story if Clyde had collapsed over one of the mean cats."[155]

Despite the obvious physical challenges, there were still flashes of the incredible showmanship that had defined his act for more than 40 years. In a review of the performance while the show was in Easton, Pennsylvania on April 29, Beatty was described as "spellbinding" as he put the cats through their series of leaps and jumps and coaxed them to roll over and lay side-by-side. The reporter also marveled when the act ended – as it always did – when Beatty slammed the steel door behind him just as a black-maned lion leapt against the safety cage.[156]

The circus continued its demanding schedule of one-day stands until it reached Maryland. After he appeared at both performances in Salisbury on May 10, Clyde Beatty made his final appearance during the matinee the next day in Annapolis.[157]

Beatty then flew to Chicago where his doctors told him it was time to go home. From Chicago he briefly returned to the show in Philadelphia where he quickly cleaned out his Airstream trailer and left for California.

One of Beatty's final interviews was with the *Daily Press* of Newport News, Virginia only a few days before he left the circus. At the time he told a reporter that even though surgery had removed two-thirds of his stomach, "I had to get back into my act. The people wanted to see me, and I did not want to disappoint them."[158]

He demonstrated that spirit a short time later when he entered the hospital in Ventura yet still refused to announce his retirement. "I will never quit," he said.

After clashing with jungle killers for most of his life, the man who had been defined by bravery and courage was now battling terminal cancer. It was a fight that he could not win.

Clyde Beatty continued to perform until just before his death in 1965.

Clyde Beatty once said that he had been clawed and bitten so many times that he had lost count. "As for the cuts, scratches and larger wounds, their scars mean the map of America to me," he once said as he recounted deadly encounters that had occurred in places such as Kokomo, Detroit, Texarkana, Peru, Indiana and Paris, Illinois – places that were located hundreds of miles from his hometown of Bainbridge, Ohio.[159]

It was on a showgrounds in one of those distant cities that a telegram arrived on the afternoon of July 19, 1965 with news that Clyde Beatty had died. He was 62.

John Pugh was assistant general manager of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. that day. He remembered being in Syracuse, New York when word arrived between the afternoon and evening performance. While those on the show knew that he was very sick, Pugh said there was a tremendous sense of loss and uncertainty when they learned that the circus' namesake had passed. "Everybody was worried whether the show would continue after that."[160]

Although the big top was full that night, there was no public announcement. A circus spokesman said, "We do not think he would have wanted it."[161]

It was a quiet finale to a breathtaking career that had unfolded during more than 20,000 performances witnessed by millions in nearly every city and town in America.

It has been said that fame is fleeting, yet Clyde Beatty became a household name at an early age and maintained his status as a "pop culture icon" for most of the 20th century. He was a tremendous showman who faced his own mortality twice a day for more than 40 years. And he did it armed with only a flimsy chair, a whip, a gun filled with blanks – and unrivaled courage. Bw

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About the Authors

Chris Berry is a regular contributor to *Bandwagon* and serves as the journal's Associate Editor. Dave Price has been a member of the Circus Historical Society for more than 60 years and is an Emeritus Trustee of the organization. Dave, along with his late wife Mary Jane, spent decades gathering materials related to Clyde Beatty – a vast collection now preserved at Illinois State University's Milner Library Special Collections. Although Dave resides in Brentwood, Tennessee and Chris lives a considerable distance away in Scottsdale, Arizona, the two circus historians have collaborated for several years to record and share this amazing story of Clyde Beatty

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145. Clyde Beatty, Jr., op. cit.
146. Letter from Clyde Beatty to Roger Smith, May 6, 1964, Roger Smith Collection.
147. Bob Good, Jr., telephone interview with Chris Berry, Sept. 21, 2021.
148. Roger Smith, telephone interview with Chris Berry, Oct. 2021.
149. Steve Davis, "Circus Thrills Many," *Kokomo Tribune,* Aug. 19, 1964, p. 23.
150. "Trainer Clawed But The Show Still Goes On," *Alton Evening Telegraph* (Alton, Illinois), Aug. 31, 1964, p. 1.
151. Clyde Beatty telegram to Frank Orman, Aug. 16, 1964, Roger Smith Collection.
152. "Trends of the Times," *Kokomo Morning Times* (Kokomo, Indiana), Aug. 19, 1964, p. 4.
153. Fred Burrall, "Circus Fans Miss Clyde Beatty," *Ft. Lauderdale News,* Oct. 23, 1964, p. 5.
154. Letters from Clyde Beatty to Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Jan. 13, 1965, and Jan. 20, 1965, private collection of Fred D. Pfening III.
155. Elston Brooks, "Pupil to Fill Beatty Cage," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* Sept. 19, 1965, p. 33.
156. Jim Tomey, "Beatty, Cats Spell: Excitement," *The Morning Call,* Allentown, Pennsylvania, Apr. 30, 1965, p. 6.
157. The exact location of Beatty's final performance has been given as both Salisbury, Maryland and Annapolis, Maryland. Beatty-Cole clown Kenny Dodd was very close to Beatty the final season. On several occasions he stated that Beatty's last appearance in the arena was in Annapolis, May 11, 1965.
158. Phil Friedlander, "Lion Tamer Beatty Proved Great Courage to the End," *Daily Press* (Newport News, Virginia), July 30, 1965, p. 10.
159. Earl Chapin May, "Nerve is Another Name for Courage," *Physical Culture,* Sept. 1932, p. 90.
160. John Pugh, telephone interview with Chris Berry, Oct. 10, 2021.
161. "The Clowns Had Tears In Their Eyes," *The Post-Standard* (Syracuse, New York), Jul. 20, 1965, p. 17.

Billing the Buffoon

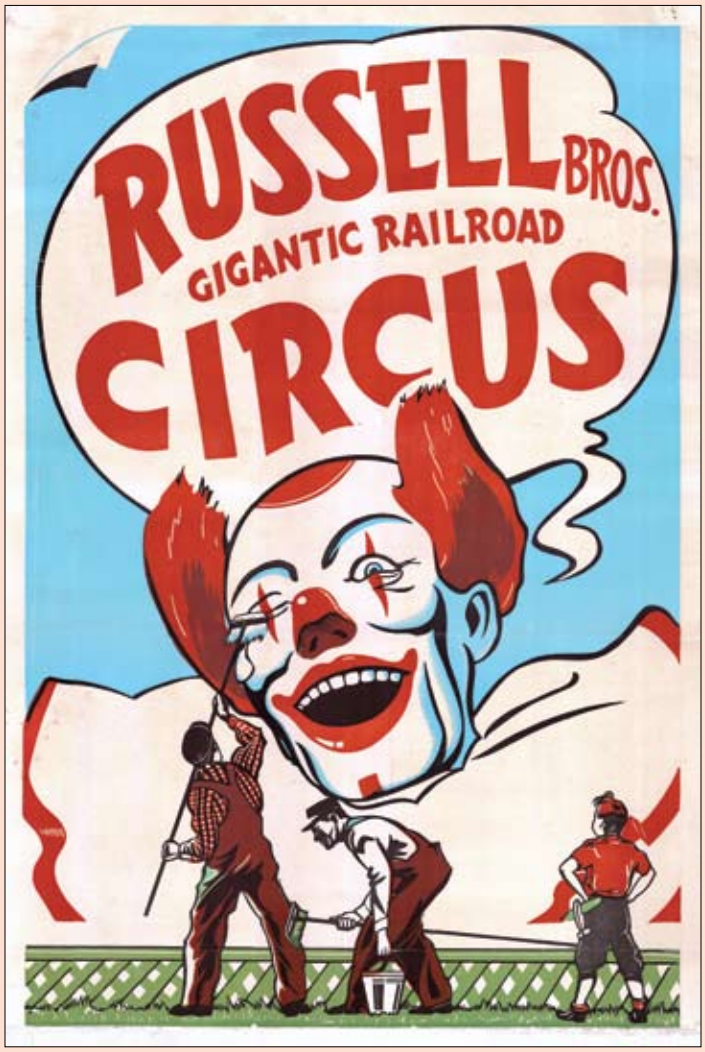
by Timothy Noel Tegge

All of the original posters reproduced in this article are from the Tegge Circus Archives.

Founded in 1852, Calhoun was one of the pioneers in large format woodblock printing. Numerous pre- and post-Civil War era showmen relied heavily on this firm to provide show bills for their enterprises. Around the time when William F. Cody and Adam Forepaugh were commissioning specialty posters and billboards from Calhoun, the plant also catered to smaller outfits offering an assortment of stock sheets. This early clown portrait is a splendid example of their work.

Hartford, Connecticut: Calhoun Print, c. 1880. Half-sheet (22" x 28")

It is nearly as impossible to pinpoint when Phineas Taylor Barnum may have declared that "clowns are the pegs on which the circus is hung" as it is to confirm the exact quote itself. Researchers argue that Barnum actually itemized both "clowns *and elephants,*" together, as those "pegs." Certainly, by the time Barnum focused entirely on a circus career, traveling shows transporting full-blown herds of elephants were already long established, so the latter quote is a genuine possibility. But as an advocate of the unadulterated circus comedian in its purest form, I would like to believe that Mr. Barnum did tip his hat exclusively to the clown, for at least



Weeks ahead of show day a small army of billposters and lithographers would scuttle into town, plastering gigantic posters in every possible shop window that would allow it as well as on barns, billboards, fences and outhouses. The images that sprang from these garish pictorials promised the biggest, the greatest, the most colossal things you could ever imagine or hope to see in person. No animals were wilder, no bareback riders more beautiful, no daring young men more handsome, and no clowns funnier.

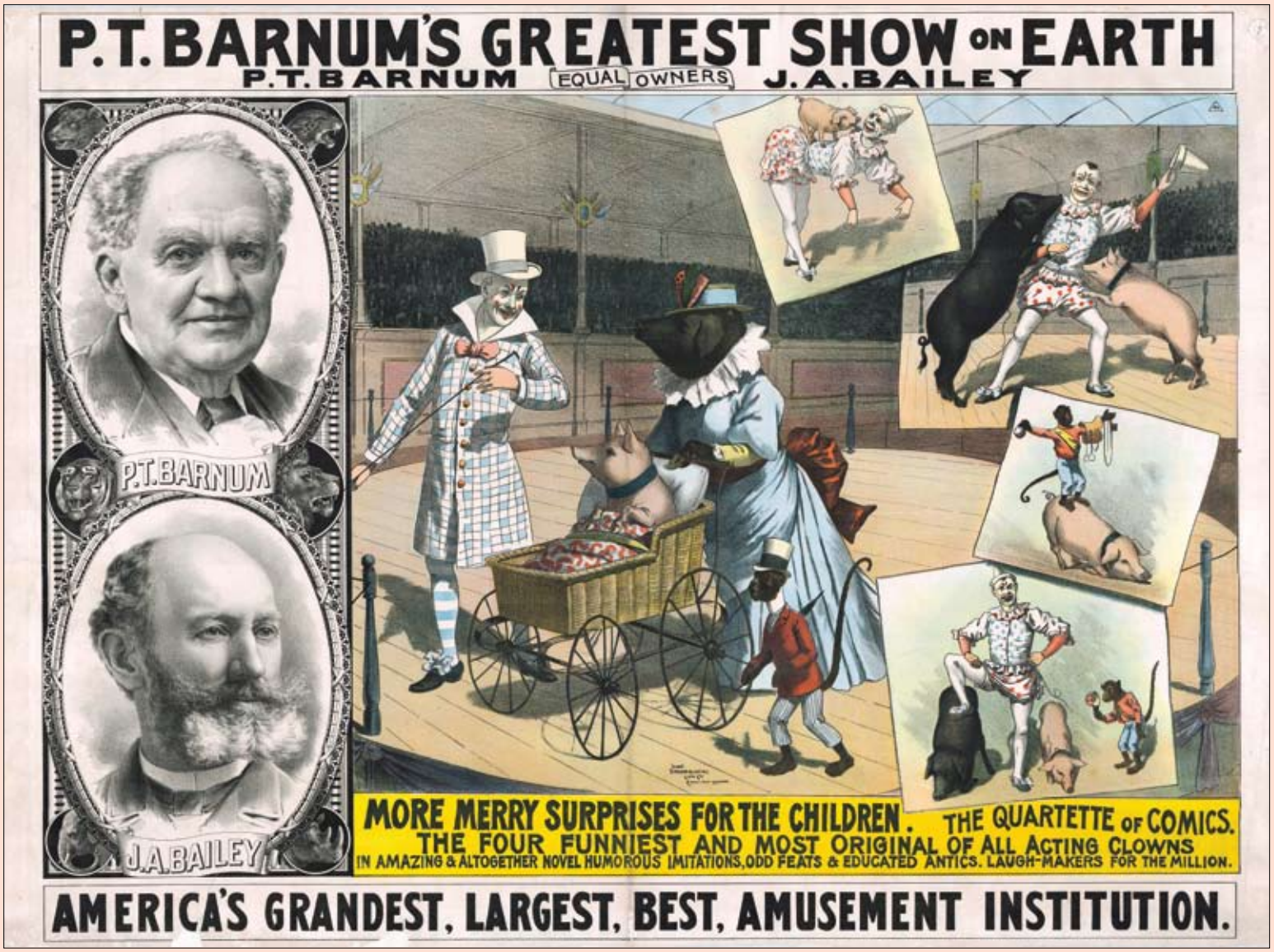
Los Angeles: Majestic Poster Press, 1943. One-sheet (28" x 42")

Right, identified as bill "No. 616" on page 24 of Erie's undated Stock Circus Posters Catalogue H, the likeness of Francis "Slivers" Oakley (1871-1916), one of the top clowns of his day, was sketched directly from a photograph. The same basic portrait, without the huddle of clowns surrounding it, was later replicated by both the Strobridge and Illinois-Central plants and used by shows well into the late 1930s.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., c. 1920-1925. Six-sheet (approx. 84" x 84")

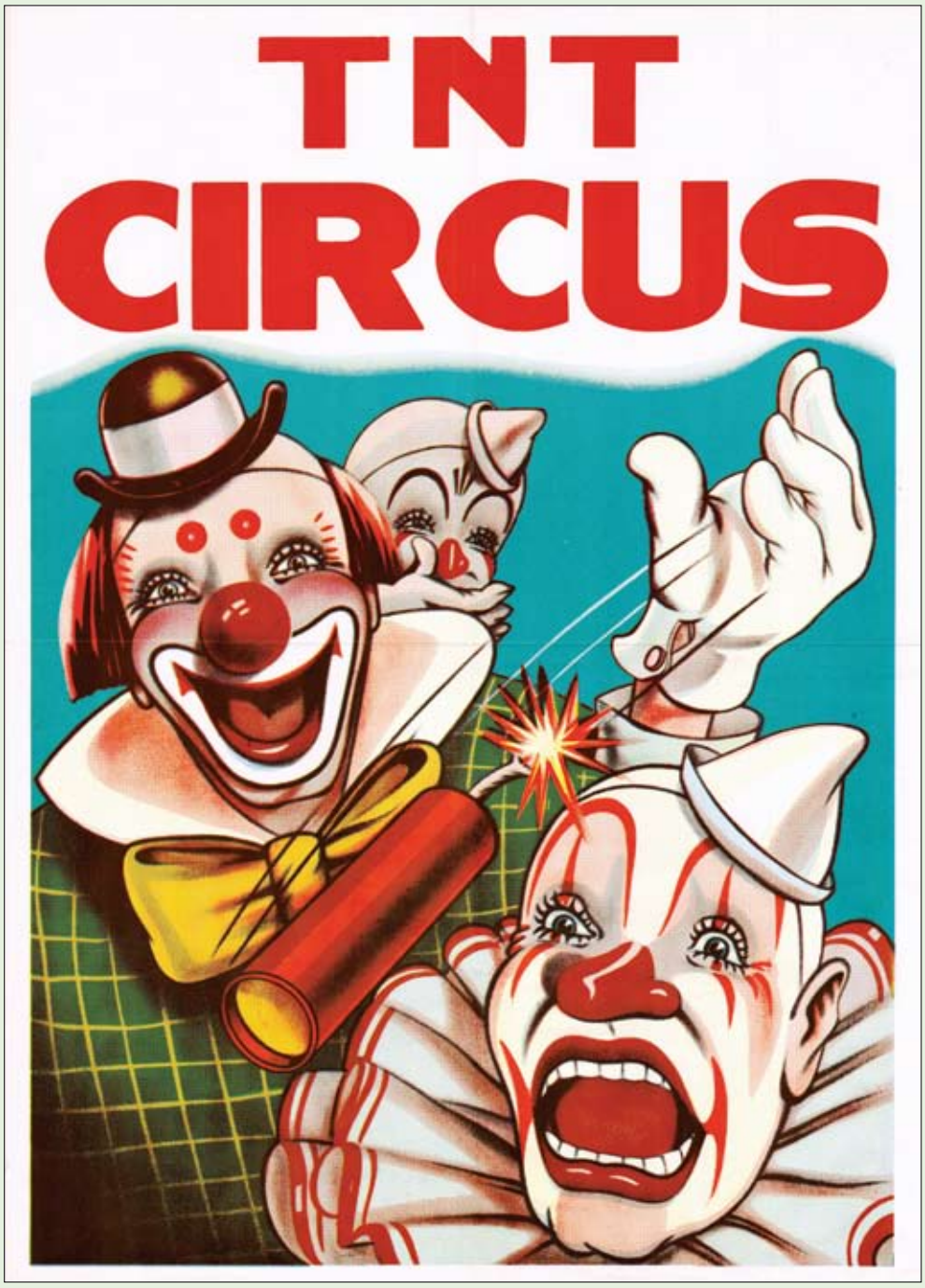
one shining moment.

The clown's role in the circus spotlight discernibly predates Barnum's conception. When John Bill Ricketts introduced circus as we identify it to America in 1793, his show included a clown. Essentially, anything branded "circus" from that point in time forward would so, as well; therefore, heralding this entity on handbills and broadsides was quite foreseeable.


P.T. BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH
P.T. BARNUM EQUAL OWNERS J.A. BAILEY
P.T. BARNUM
J.A. BAILEY
MORE MERRY SURPRISES FOR THE CHILDREN. THE QUARTETTE OF COMICS.
THE FOUR FUNNIEST AND MOST ORIGINAL OF ALL ACTING CLOWNS
IN AMAZING & ALTOGETHER NOVEL HUMOROUS IMITATIONS, ODD FEATS & EDUCATED ANTICS. LAUGH-MAKERS FOR THE MILLION.
AMERICA'S GRANDEST, LARGEST, BEST, AMUSEMENT INSTITUTION.

Within the cache of customized pictorials publicizing their new partnership as "equal owners" of P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth, *Barnum and James A. Bailey declared this nameless quartet to be "the four funniest and most original of all acting clowns."*

Cincinnati: Strobridge Litho. Company, 1888. One-sheet (30" x 40")

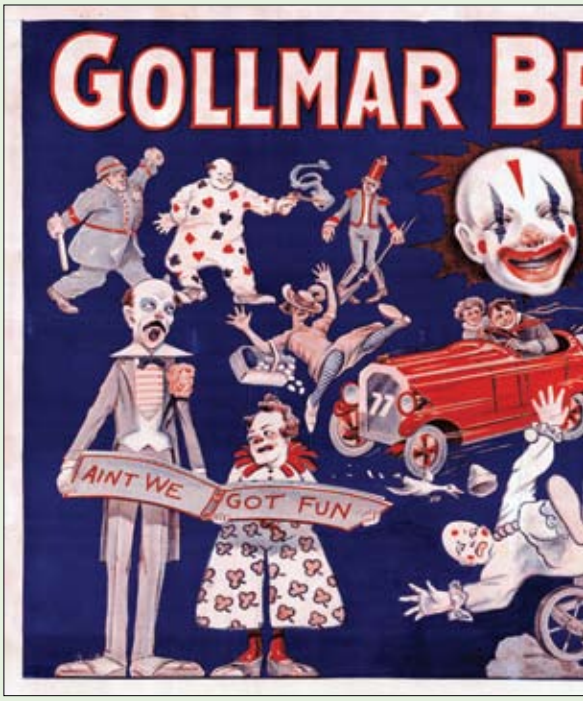


Artist Forrest Freeland's portrayal of three mischievous clowns wreaking havoc amongst themselves with a lit stick of dynamite was most likely Globe's all-time best-selling design. The majority of shows between 1945-1975 saw their titles etched above this classic graphic.

Chicago: Globe Poster Corporation, 1964. Half-sheet (22" x 28")

Long before he dove headfirst into the sawdust, there is abundant evidence that Barnum well understood the significance of comic relief, integrating in his various enterprises some of the greatest clowns and humorists of the day – Joe Pentland and George L. Fox, for example. When his next phase of extravaganza eventually set out on the road, the clown was ever prominent and would soon attain regal status in Barnum's ever-growing cast of characters.

Exciting new techniques in lithography were being refined around the same time that Barnum, William Cameron Coup, and Dan Castello – once a clown in his own right – set out on the road with P. T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome in 1871. The advent of a three-color printing process revolutionized the way the world was able to visibly tout everything from dry goods to pageantry. These innovations gave birth to what everyone would soon come to recognize as "the poster," and who better to fully embrace and at the same time exploit this medium stateside than the great showman himself?



Before long, whether as the main subject matter or as a subtle inclusion in other more dramatic illustrations, clowns were established as crucial exemplifications for advertising the circus on tens of thousands of posters and billboards. Throughout the 150 years that followed the debut of Barnum's great show and to this very day, the buffoon singularly stands as perhaps the most universal icon of the spectacle. Furthermore, by the early 1900s, that same figure also became more consistently associated with carnival billing as well, representing the ultimate ambassador of laughter and gaiety.

In the heyday of their lithographic representation, the vast majority of clowns were predominantly of the white-face style, possibly because of their perkier and more accessible manifestation. Character clowns – the rubes, tramps, blackface minstrels, and even the occasional female in drag – actually followed next in the chain of command, while the

Left, although generally a stock printer, Riverside occasionally created custom designs for various shows, like this chaotic montage of clownish vignettes, which was produced for the American Circus Corporation's Gollmar show. Referencing the contemporary jazz-age hit Ain't We Got Fun, *published only one year prior, this piece was perceived to be quite modern.*

Milwaukee and Chicago: Riverside Print Company, 1922. One-sheet (28" x 42")

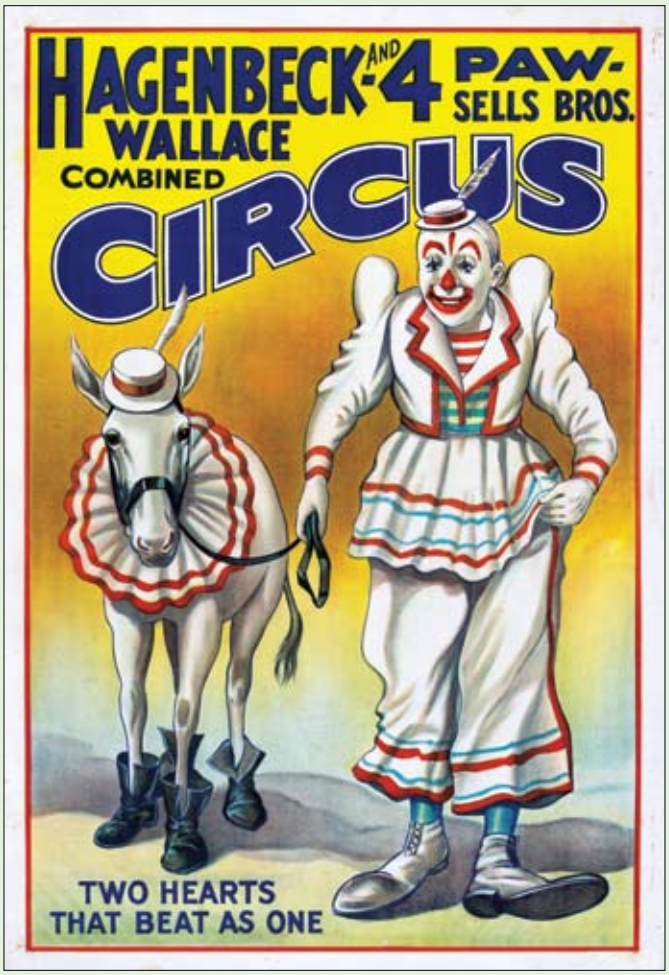
"Auguste" clown brought up the rear. In Europe, however, the whiteface and Auguste styles tended to share a bit more equality in print, with offspring of the character clown trailing somewhat behind.

As to who the very first American clown to be portrayed on an actual color-lithographed poster may have been, speculation may fuel further arguments when proposing early American clowns such as John Durang, Alfred Miaco, or Dan Rice – all notable exponents in the art of merrymaking.

Repeatedly, the widely concocted faces used on posters were merely interpretations

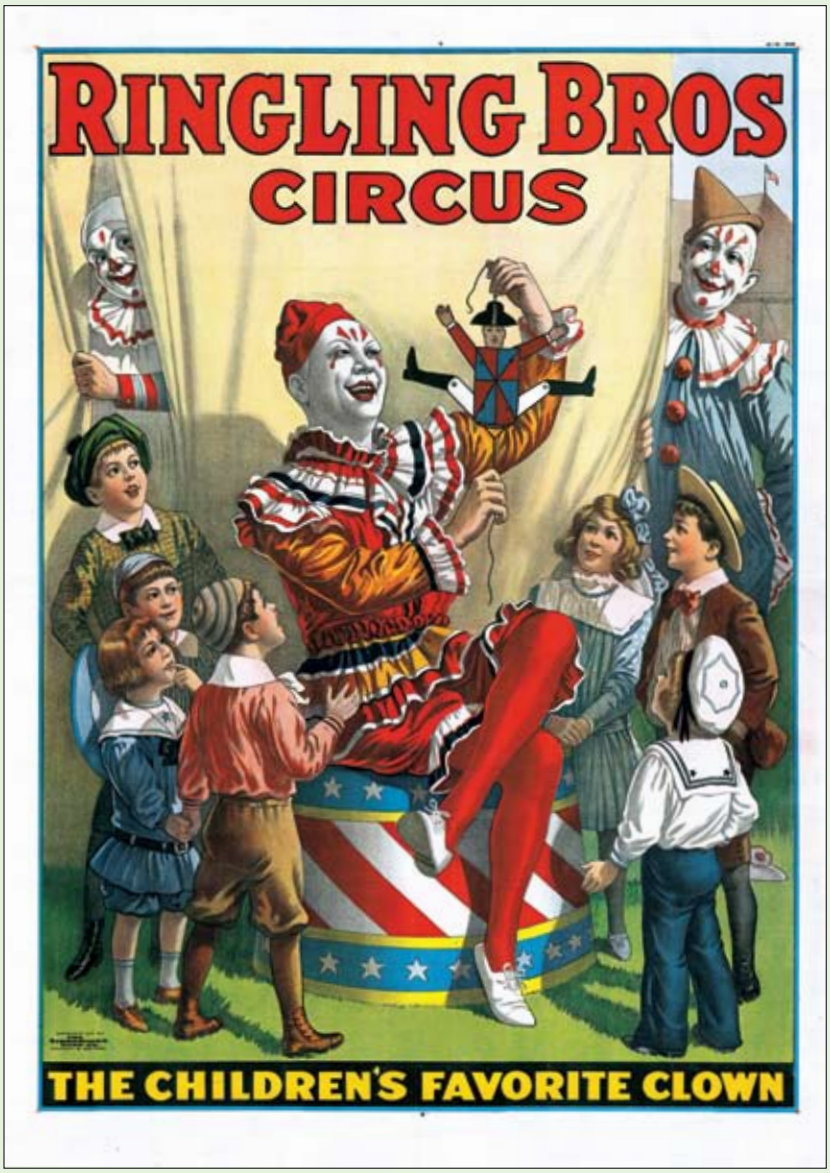
Below right, "The Children's Favorite Clown" was possibly ***the*** *consummate portrayal of what the clown represents – a comic yet elegant ambassador of goodwill, respected and idolized by both children and adults.*

Cincinnati and New York: Strobridge Litho. Company, 1917. One-sheet (30" x 40")



Embellished from a photograph of Felix Adler (1895-1960) leading a mule out of the big top, this whimsical artwork proved popular with circus goers all across the country.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., 1935. One-sheet (28" x 42")



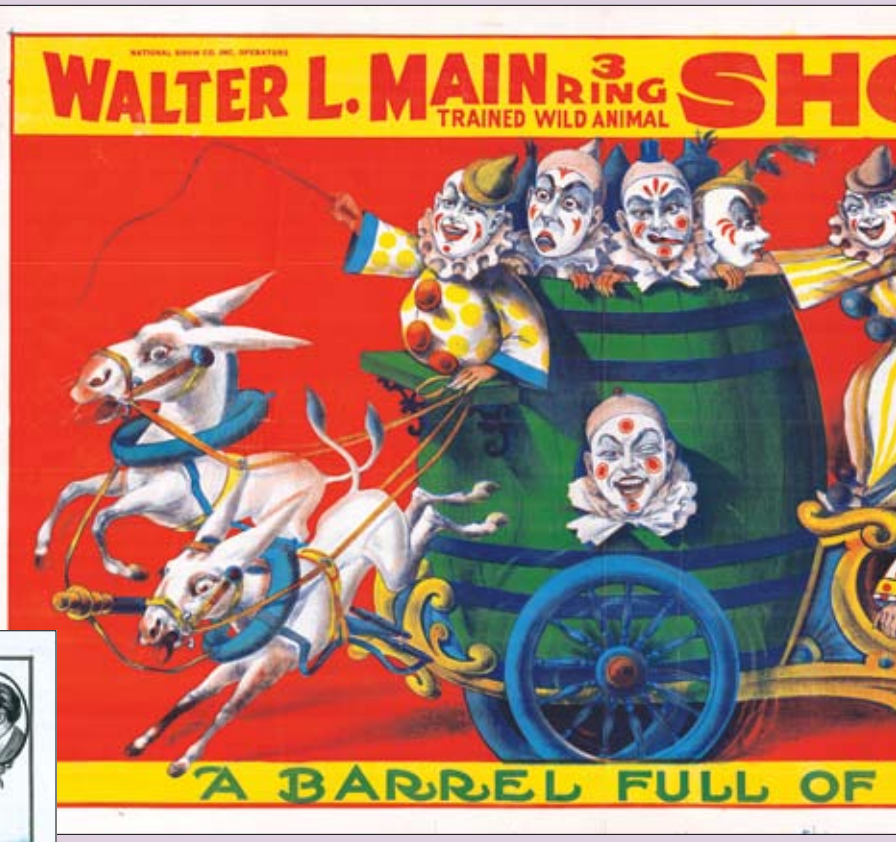
CARL HAGENBECK-WA
40 CLOWNS
COUNT 'EM 40

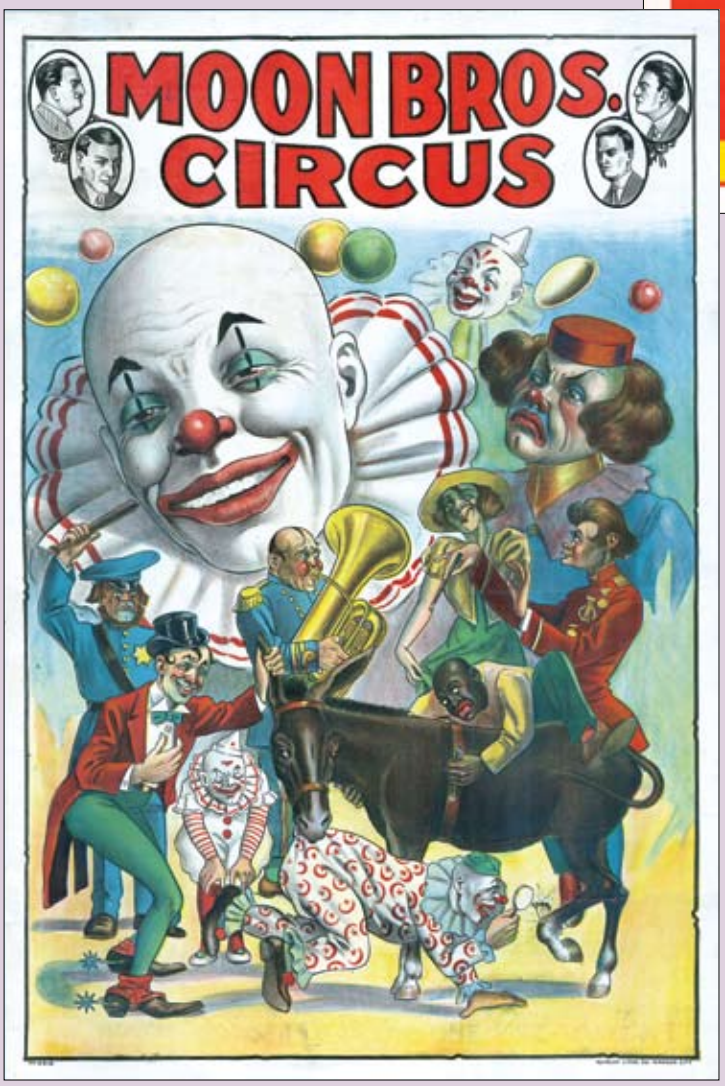
What better way to trumpet the circus's arrival than with a swarm of chalk-faced musicians? One may very well have heard the 1920s roar loud and clear, simply by standing in front of this striking pictorial. Like the circus itself, this remarkable depiction is larger than life.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho. & Ptg. Co., 1921.
Nine-sheet
(approx. 84" x 126")

Right, this unusual design puts a rather eccentric twist on displaying clowns in action, the figures and faces looking almost puppet-like and slightly surreal. Although this artwork was undoubtedly created and first printed in the early 1900s, Riverside obviously had plenty of them on a stockpile years later. The Walter L. Main title is another that was resurrected numerous times over a span of more than 60 years by about a half-dozen different proprietors. This particular incarnation of the show was operated by the National Show Company, Inc., headed by Walter L. Main, himself, in partnership with William "Honest Bill" Newton Jr.

Milwaukee and Chicago: Riverside Print Company, 1930. One-sheet (28" x 42")





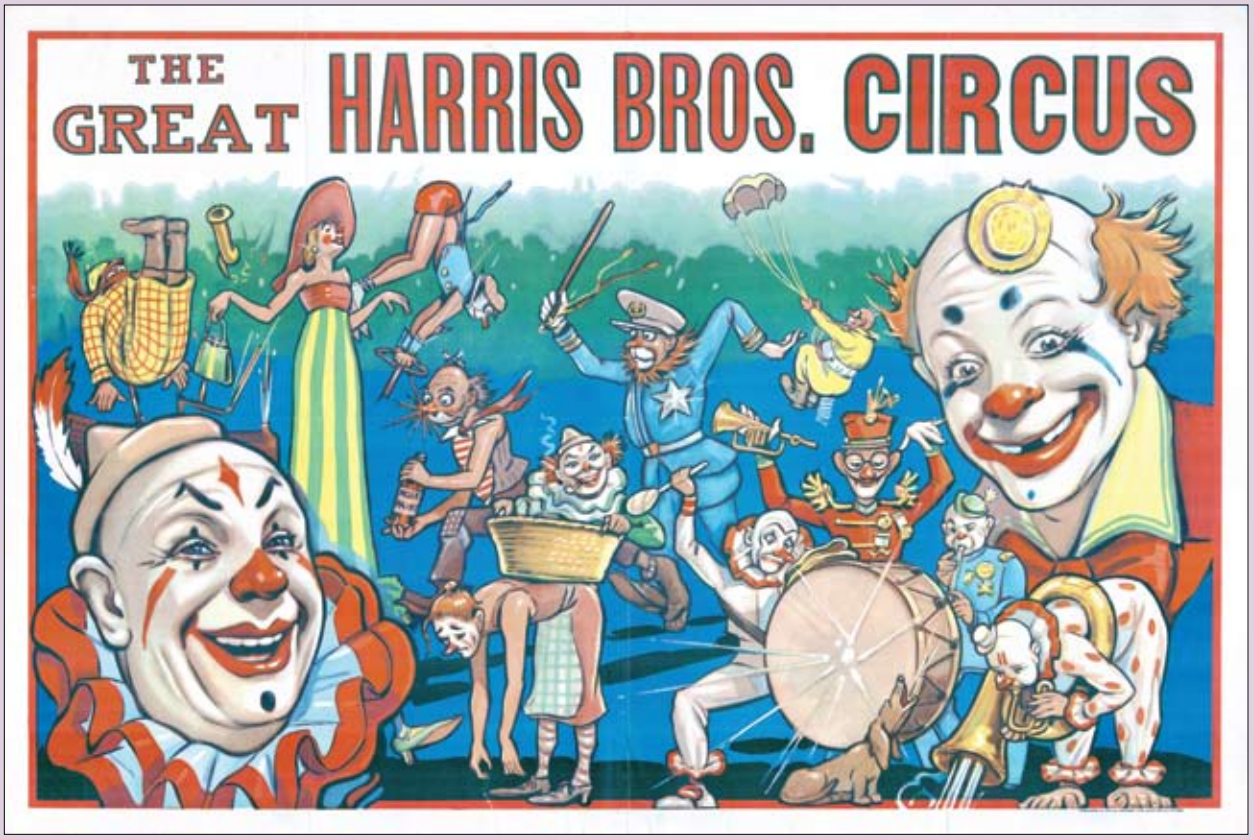
As pictured in the title heading of this uncommon pictorial, the brothers Moon – all four of them – did not exist. In reality, the proprietors were Cly Newton and William "Honest Bill" Newton, Jr. The graphic emits a bizarre, laughably weird, and almost Felliniesque quality.

Kansas City, Missouri: Quigley Litho Company, 1925. One-sheet (28" x 42")

Below, it is plausible that when the Sells brothers returned from Australia, featured clowns Billy Carroll and his "famous funny brother Bill" did not. Aside from this poster, nothing else is known to have been discovered about these comedians.

Cincinnati and New York: Strobridge Litho. Company, 1891. One-sheet (30" x 40")

JUST RETURNED FROM AUSTRALIA
ROMAN HIPPODROME
3 RING CIRCUS
TWO ELEVATED STAGES,
5 CONTINENT MENAGERIE
IMPERIAL JAPANESE TROUPE
SELLS BROTHERS
HASSAN BEN ALI'S
MOORISH CARAVAN
ARABIAN NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENT
AND SPECTACULAR
PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA
BILLY CARROLL & BROTHER
"HERE WE GO!"
"ROMEO & JULIET"
"DON'T BE AFRAID! I'M HERE!"
"ME AND BROTHER BILL"
"KEEP STILL I'VE GOT HIM!"
THE CLOWNS' FROLICS, EXEMPLIFIED BY MR. BILLY CARROLL & HIS FAMOUS FUNNY BROTHER, INTRODUCING NEW AND IMMENSELY FUNNY BUSINESS, TRANSFORMATIONS, TERMS AND DIALOGUES - THIS FEATURE OF THE UNITED SHOWS SURPASSES ANYTHING EVER BEFORE SEEN WITH A CIRCUS.



Above, another well-known stock house, Donaldson, was located just across the Ohio River a couple of miles from the Strobridge plant in Cincinnati. Donaldson's offerings to the itinerant show industry were plentiful and exceptional. This wonderful clown bill is a prime example of the work they did. Circus entrepreneur Floyd King and his less recognized brother, Howard, took the Harris title over the road twice, in 1924 and again in 1938. It was just one of several appellations they used over several decades.

Newport, Kentucky: Donaldson Litho Company, 1938. One-sheet (28" x 42")

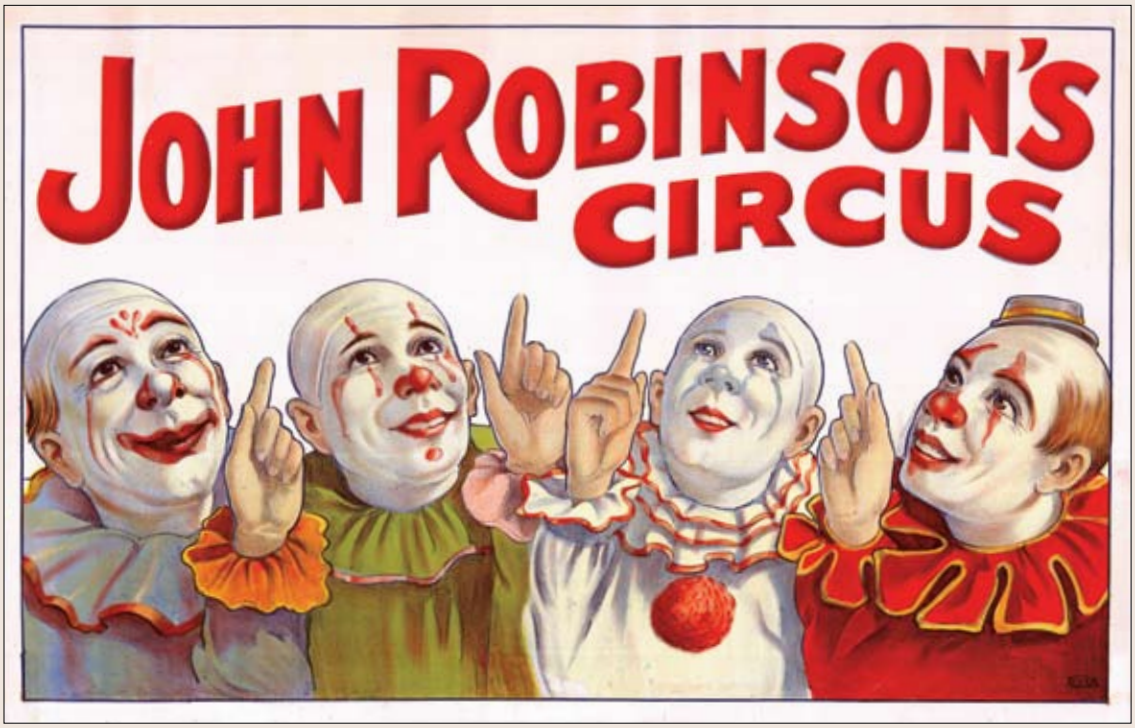
of what any given artist (most of whom remained anonymous throughout their careers) believed clowns should look like – "poetic license," so to speak. In many cases, however, the occasional photograph of an actual working performer could greatly influence an illustrator's brush. Numerous examples of this have surfaced over the years, some more recognizable than others. Noted mid-20th-century Ameri-

Left, this illustration places everyone and everything within an arm's reach of the action in a predicament. Black or white, male or female, human or beast – they're all in the same boat, and if they endure the turmoil, they can all sit down together and have a good laugh afterwards. Whether it was the intention of the artists who created the bill or the powers that commissioned it, this rare pictorial brazenly challenged the sensibilities of that time and would certainly be unacceptable today.

New York, Chicago and St. Louis: National Printing and Engraving, 1919. Half-sheet (22" x 28")

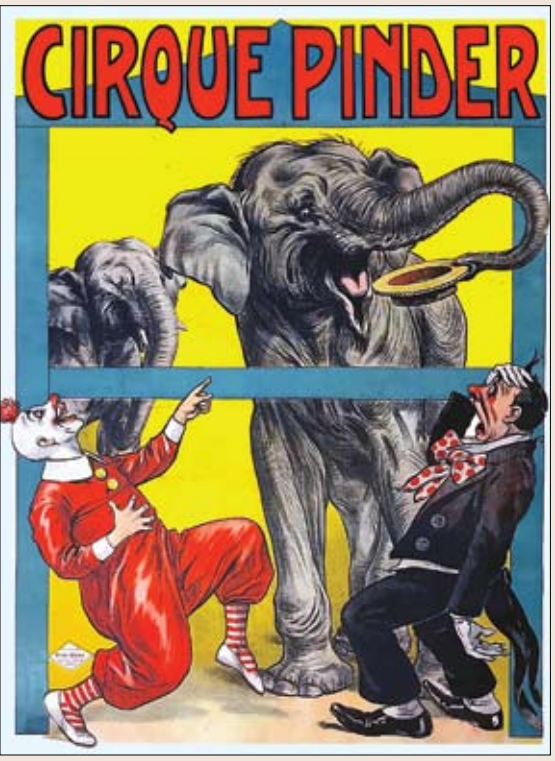
The absence of words like "Combined Shows" or "Circus," which were habitually extant on the majority of the "Big One's" billing throughout the decades, indirectly accentuates the idea that the show title was as synonymous with circus as clowns themselves. As for the sea of faces embodied within this busy mosaic, the fact that the whiteface clown was the artists' preferred representation may never have been better validated. There are 88 variations denoted here. Of the dozen that remain, nine of them best resemble character makeups (rubes, female drags and peripheral ethnic comedians), while only three reflect true Auguste features.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., 1928. One-sheet (28" x 42")



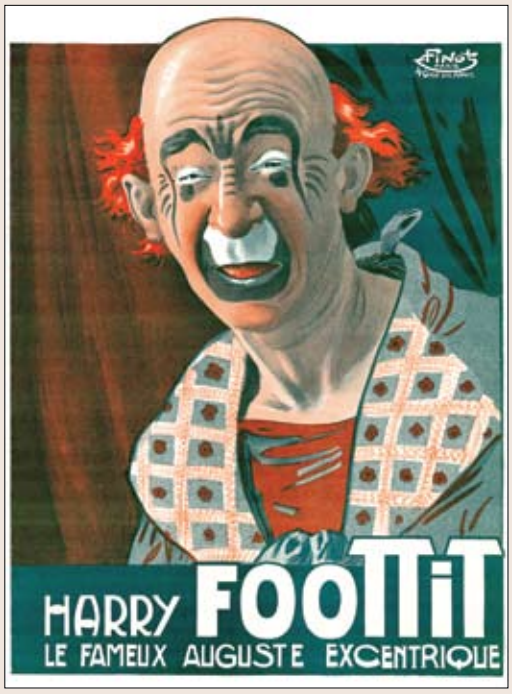
A quartet of whiteface clowns point lovingly upwards to their establishment's title. Their starry-eyed expressions suggest perhaps that payday was just around the corner.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., c. 1925-1929. One-sheet (28" x 42")



Barnum's pegs and colleagues exemplified. This charming visual symbolizes the long-standing affiliation between the clown and elephant. Both are curious, playful and spontaneous in mutual admiration.

Paris, France: Affiches Louis Galice, c. 1915-1920.
Two-sheet (approx. 47" x 63")



Harry Foottit (1892-1935) was a younger sibling to the great English whiteface George Foottit (1864-1921). Brother George became a sensation in France and elsewhere in Europe as half of the celebrated team of "Foottit et Chocolat." Harry, on the other hand, pretty much went unnoticed. His greatest accolade may have been this marvelous poster. The traditional Auguste clown was glorified more frequently on European posters than on those posted stateside. Perhaps the whiteface clown was thought to be more visible under the massive American tents with limited lighting.

Paris, France: Finot, c. 1920.
Quarter sheet (approx. 15" x 23")

Before taking Broadway by storm with his 1907 Follies, *Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. managed Prussian strongman Eugene Sandow, featuring him as the centerpiece of a lavish touring vaudeville company. Among the myriad of artistes contracted to share the stage with Sandow was a French clown and oral mimic by the name of Mons. O'Gust. Applauded by the press and public as a musical genius, O'Gust would vocally imitate both animals and instruments in story and song.*

New York: Metropolitan Print,
c. 1895. Half-sheet
(approx. 20" x 30")

can circus illustrator Bill Bailey's clown faces, which predominantly adorned 1940s and 1950s-era Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey pictorials, include very discernible resemblances of Felix Adler, Paul Jerome, Lou Jacobs, and Jack LeClaire. On the other hand, veteran artists Roland Butler's and Forrest Freeland's clown renderings fall into a more generic category. While being individually detectable by the style in which they were drawn, Butler and Freeland display conspicuous similarities in their subjects' facial expressions, with mouths unrealistically gigantic and eyes protuberant. In comparison, Butler's clowns seem considerably more garish and overstated than Freeland's.

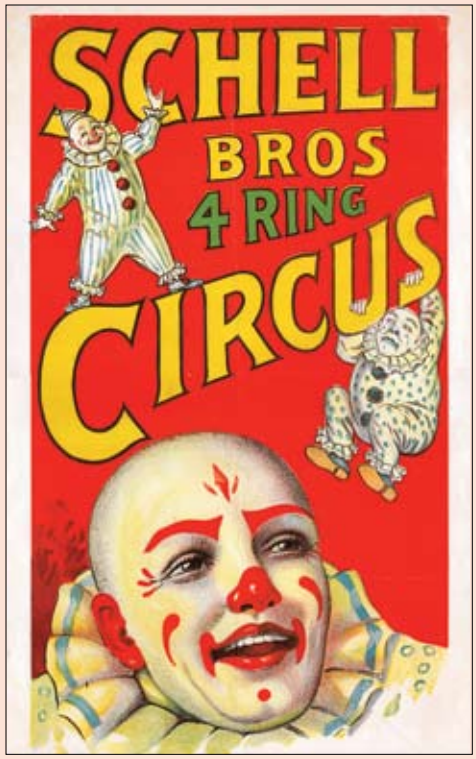
When my father abandoned his nine-to-five world completely in 1964 to frame out the family's TNT Circus, the first professional posters we used were acquired from Chicago's well-known Globe Poster Corporation, one of a handful of "stock" houses in the

"Star paper" was usually reserved for the choice few. Having one's mirror image adorn a poster was an honor that hardly ever found its way into clown alley. In the mid-1940s, however, Otto Griebling (1896-1972) made the grade, singled out amid "50 Nationally Known Funmakers."

Erie, Pennsylvania:
Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., 1947.
Six-sheet (approx. 84" x 84")

Hollywood screen legend Lon Chaney never trouped with this Wisconsin-based truck show. It's safe to say that he more than likely never even saw it. That minor detail didn't stop show management from plagiarizing his clown persona, as seen in MGM's 1928 film Laugh, Clown, Laugh, *to help promote their extravaganza.*

Mason City, Iowa: Central Show Print, c. 1933-1935. One-sheet (28" x 42")

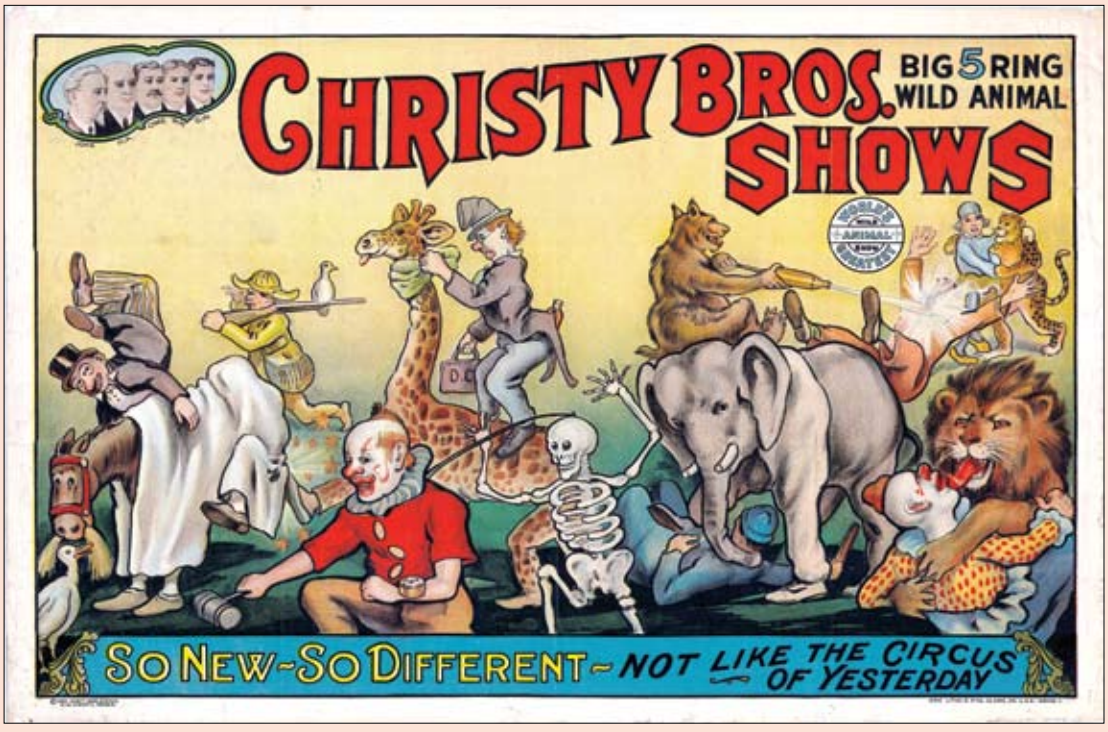


The motorized Schell Bros. Circus, operated by native Minnesotan George Engesser between 1929-1936, was probably the most successful of his tent show endeavors. This handsome little lithograph pays homage to the archetypal whiteface.

St. Paul, Minnesota: Standard Litho, 1935. Quarter-sheet panel (approx. 14" x 22")

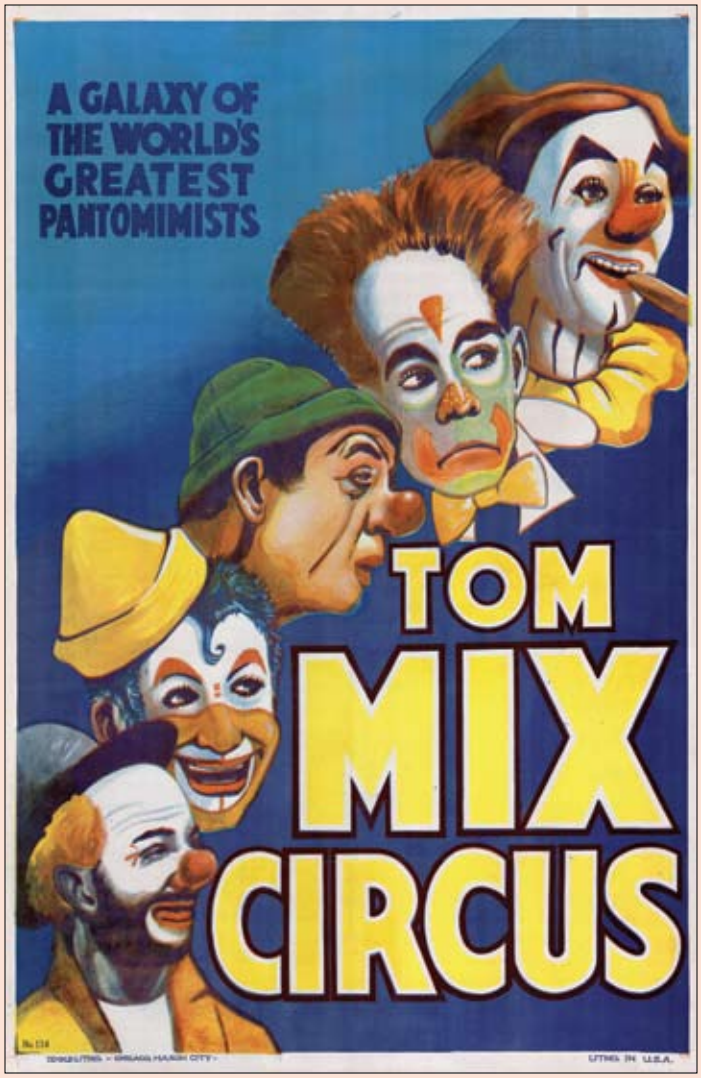
In addition to the anticipated rides, games of chance, and concession joints, traveling carnivals such as De Kreko Bros. Shows always carried a number of added attractions such as side shows, musical revues, girl shows, and very often circus acts. Despite the size of the outfit and their offerings, the image of a clown always assured the public that a good time was to be had by all.

Milwaukee and Chicago: Riverside Print Company, c. 1915-1920. One-sheet (28" x 42")



George Washington Christy promised the public that his show was "not like the circus of yesterday," and when it was time to send in the clowns, he just may have been correct in stating so. Their routines were so up-to-date that they included an appearance by Barney Google's horse "Spark Plug," who first surfaced in the popular comic strip only a couple of years prior. Another novelty found was a life-size animated skeleton chasing a clown through the big top, a bit first introduced by famous clown Paul Wenzel (1888-1973) in 1923.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., 1925. One-sheet (28" x 42").



This fine-looking piece integrates the likenesses of two actual clowns: George "Bumpsy Anthony" Hulme (1901-1989), right smack in the middle; and Dennis Stevens (1914-1986), just above Anthony, to the right. Movie cowboy Tom Mix bought the Sam B. Dill Circus at the end of its 1934 season, gussied it up a bit for the following year, and headed out overland from 1935-1938.

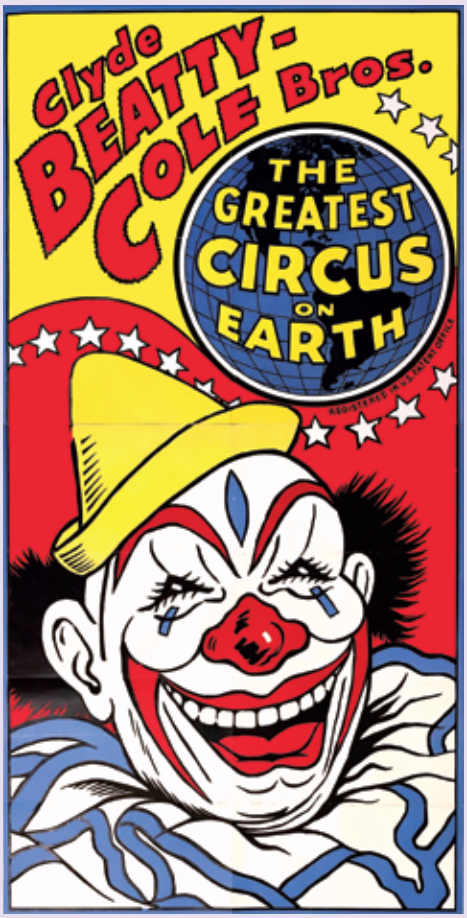
Mason City, Iowa: Temple Litho, 1936. One-sheet (28" x 42")

country that, over many decades, supplied paper to just about every circus and carnival outfit that took to the road. Forrest Freeland did a lot of work for Globe, some of which actually bears his insignia, a forward and backward F (ꟻF) placed side by side in an almost crest-like configuration, and some that do not. Among those creations is perhaps Globe's most popularly selling stock bill ever. Although lacking his familiar logo, it is unmistakably Freeland's – evident by his recurrent use of pastels to intensify stylishly outlined and thickly lashed eyes with slightly puffy lower lids. The artwork depicts three clowns, one tossing a gigantic lit firecracker in front of the second, while the third, in the background, covers his snicker with his hand. Available in half-sheet (22" x 28"), one-sheet (28" x 42"), two-sheet (42" x 56"), and six-sheet (approx. 84" x 112") size formats, the design was used by just about every indoor or outdoor, large or small show on the road between 1945 through 1975, including the mighty TNT.

I well recall, as a teenager, briefly meeting Freeland not long before he passed away in 1975. Having mentioned that I hailed from Chicago, he almost immediately brought up doing artwork for Globe 30 years prior. He told me that circus mogul Floyd King once complimented him by declaring the clown and firecracker bill to be, in King's humble opinion, possibly the greatest circus poster ever designed, "because you knew

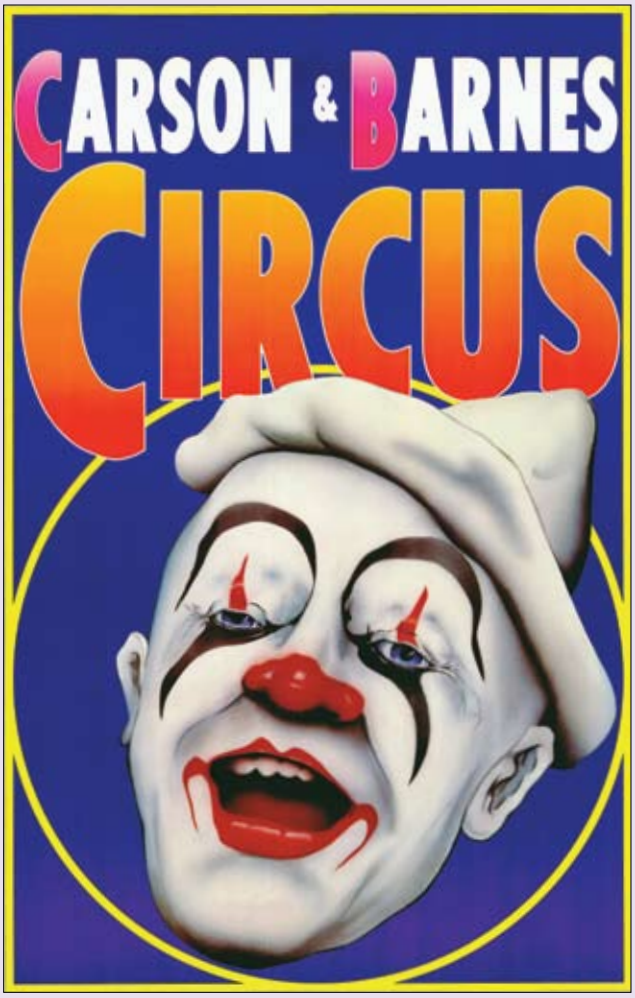
Long before the advent of what Americans recognized as a "clown car" – that hollowed-out vehicle from which a small army of bodies emerged – there was the classic "jalopy." Frequently, a Model T Ford or something similar, the vehicle used for the act had already seen better days, even by late 1920s standards. Rigged to sputter, smoke, backfire, and fall apart on command, the audiences simply howled with laughter at its predictable unpredictability.

Erie, Pennsylvania: Erie Litho & Ptg. Co., 1927. One-sheet (28" x 42")



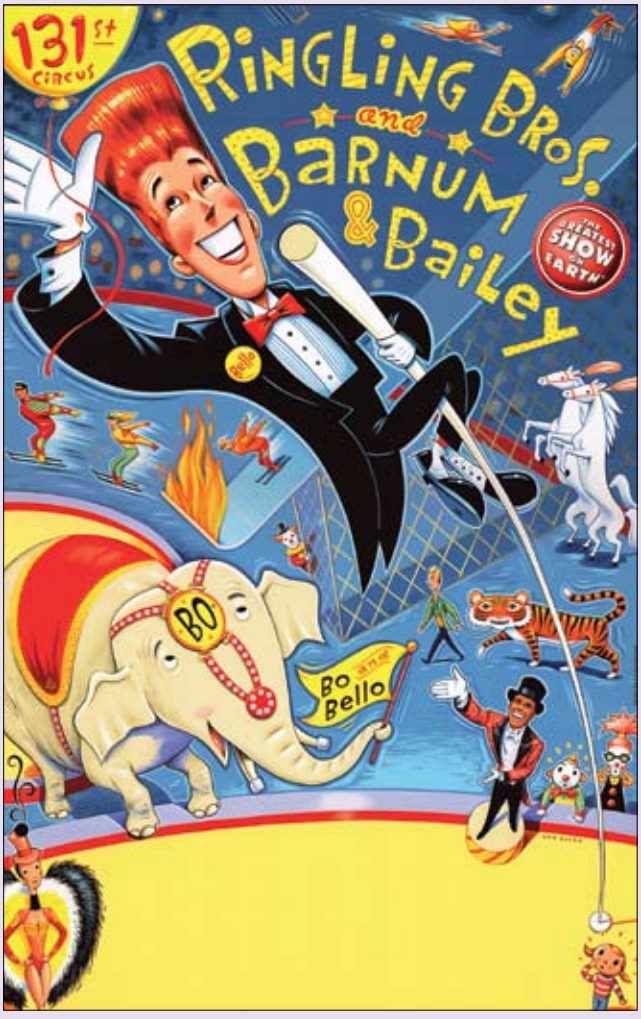
This flashy poster sports the artistic flair of legendary circus artist Roland Butler. In comparison to those of fellow illustrator Forrest Freeland, Butler's features and expressions are noticeably more overpowering. The inclusion of the globe logo, plagiarized from the long-trademarked Ringling-Barnum emblem, may or may not have been Butler's idea. Nonetheless, it cost Beatty owners a considerable amount of money after a lawsuit was filed by The Greatest Show on Earth.

Cincinnati: Enquirer Printing Company, 1959. Three-sheet (approx. 42" x 84")



Some consider this to be the last great traditional clown poster of the 20th century, a throwback to those lush, vibrant works of art on paper that simply screamed C-I-R-C-U-S from a distance.

Las Vegas: Graphics 2000, 1989. One-sheet (approx. 22" x 34")



instantly what it was peddling."

Smaller traveling shows, particularly those that may not have carried larger animal acts (elephants, lions and tigers, etc.), could always trust "stock" pictorials featuring clowns to emphasize the important message that the circus was coming to town. The image of a clown was so synonymous with the circus that whenever one surfaced *not* in conjunction with promoting a show, it nonetheless automatically conveyed "circus" in the public's mind.

Whether showing a clown standing alone in the limelight or escorted by everything from a majestic elephant to a mule wearing tennis shoes, or whether evoking the likes of Jules Tournour, Lou Jacobs, or Otto Griebling, the creators of these lithographs understood that clowns were indispensable mainstays to the world of make believe: the "pegs" on which the circus hangs. BW

New panache for a new century, the 131st edition of The Greatest Show on Earth *provided an imaginative style in circus graphics, featuring its latest comedic hero, Bello Nock, whose sidekick, by the way, was elephant Bo. From Barnum to Bello, the circle was complete.*

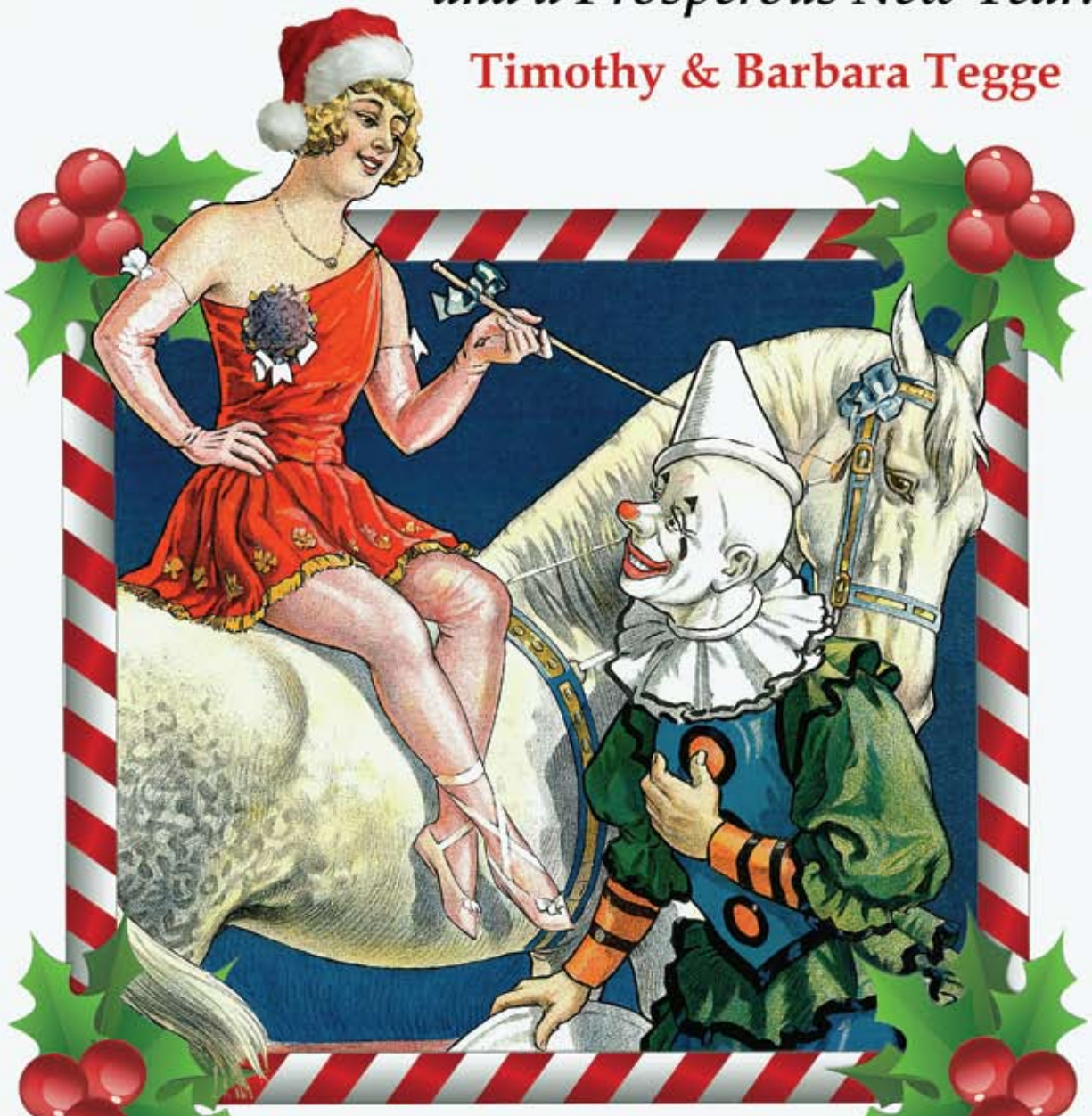
Printer unknown, 2001. Window card (14" x 22")

Wishing You

Greetings of the Season

and a Prosperous New Year!

Timothy & Barbara Tegge



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An Institution Worthy of its Originator: P. T. Barnum Launches his "Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome"

by Adrienne Saint-Pierre, Curator, Barnum Museum

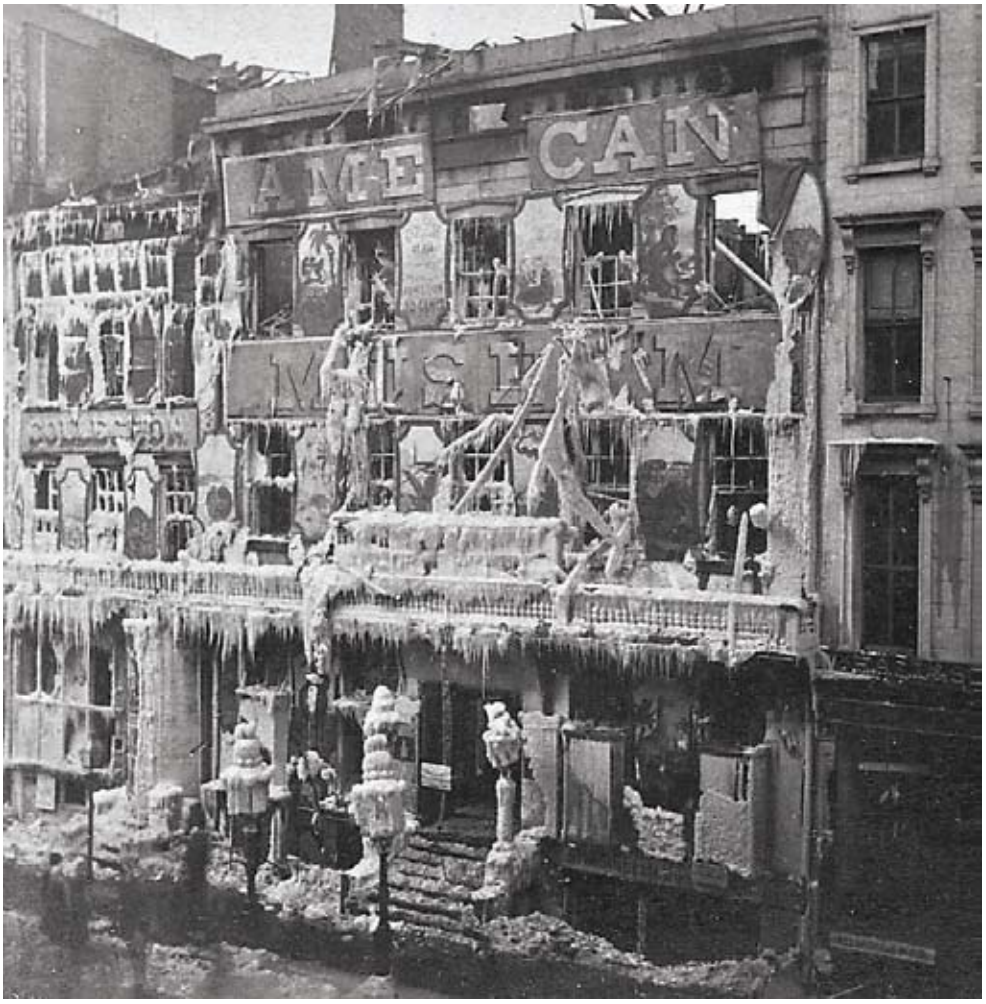
Autographed carte de visite photograph of P. T. Barnum inscribed with the date, 1875. J. Landry, Photographer, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut (BM-MSS-002)

"My chief object in setting on foot this great travelling Exhibition is to establish a safety-valve for my present pent-up energies. The next object is to please the public," wrote P. T. Barnum in the 1871 edition of his autobiography *Struggles and Triumphs, or Forty Years Recollections.*[1] He was describing the genesis of his circus enterprises, which began that same year and would become the foundation for his best-known legacy, "Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth." A long-time showman and the proprietor of the American Museum in New York City from December of 1841 to 1868, Barnum had found retirement unfulfilling, and was ready to embark on a grand new endeavor when circus businessman William C. Coup approached him about a partnership. This year, 2021, marks the 150th anniversary of that milestone in the history of American circuses, the perfect time to put a lens on "P. T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome" by looking at contemporary descriptions of its inaugural year, including newspaper accounts of incidents, advertisements, and Barnum's perspective on his experiment as revealed through his own words.

After the second iteration of Barnum's American Museum was consumed by fire on the night of March 3, 1868, the showman took the advice of his long-time friend Horace Greeley, who suggested that he "Accept this fire as a notice to quit, and go a-fishing."[2] Barnum was, after all, a very rich man and had several grandchildren, a magnificent country home in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and an elegant home on New York's Fifth Avenue. At age 58 he could well afford to step back from business and enjoy a carefree life. But retirement was not a lifestyle that suited his restless, energetic, and competitive nature. He thrived on looking to the future, on pursuing ever-bigger goals, discovering more, acquiring more, and creating more than anyone else in the business of popular entertainment.

Though ostensibly retired in the late 1860s, Barnum did not entirely step away from the work he loved best – among other things, his hoax-of-a-hoax, a copy of the Cardiff Giant, was created during this period. But he still craved the pace



Photograph extracted from a stereo card showing the fire-damaged remains of Barnum's second American Museum, 539-42 Broadway, New York City. The catastrophe occurred on March 3, 1868, less than three years after the first museum succumbed to fire, and led to Barnum's brief retirement. "Anthony's Stereoscopic Views" series published by E. & H. T. Anthony Company Wikimedia Commons

of the entertainment business and the scale of challenges he had been accustomed to. In autumn of 1870 an opportunity arose to multiply his interests again, though accounts differ as to whether Barnum initiated the proposal or if it was Wisconsin businessman William Cameron Coup, whom he had employed years before in the early 1850s. The idea may have come from showman Dan Castello who was a partner of Coup's at the time.[3]

In the late 1860s, Coup had successfully collaborated with Castello to create Dan Castello's Great Circus & Egyptian Caravan, a show that travelled through towns and lumber camps in the upper Midwest. Now it was proposed that Barnum join them in a popular entertainment venture bearing Barnum's name, an enterprise that would be greatly expanded with an investment of his capital. Coup would serve as the executive manager of the operations. For Barnum, the opportunity was irresistible, though his family protested, expecting his involvement would lead to long absences. On October 8, 1870, the partnership was formalized.[4] Barnum, who had the greatest financial stake, was to receive two-thirds of the profits, and Coup and Castello would divide the remaining third. Barnum claimed, however, that increasing his wealth was not his objective and at that point in his life, "my worldly possessions…[are]…as ample as I care to acquire."[5]

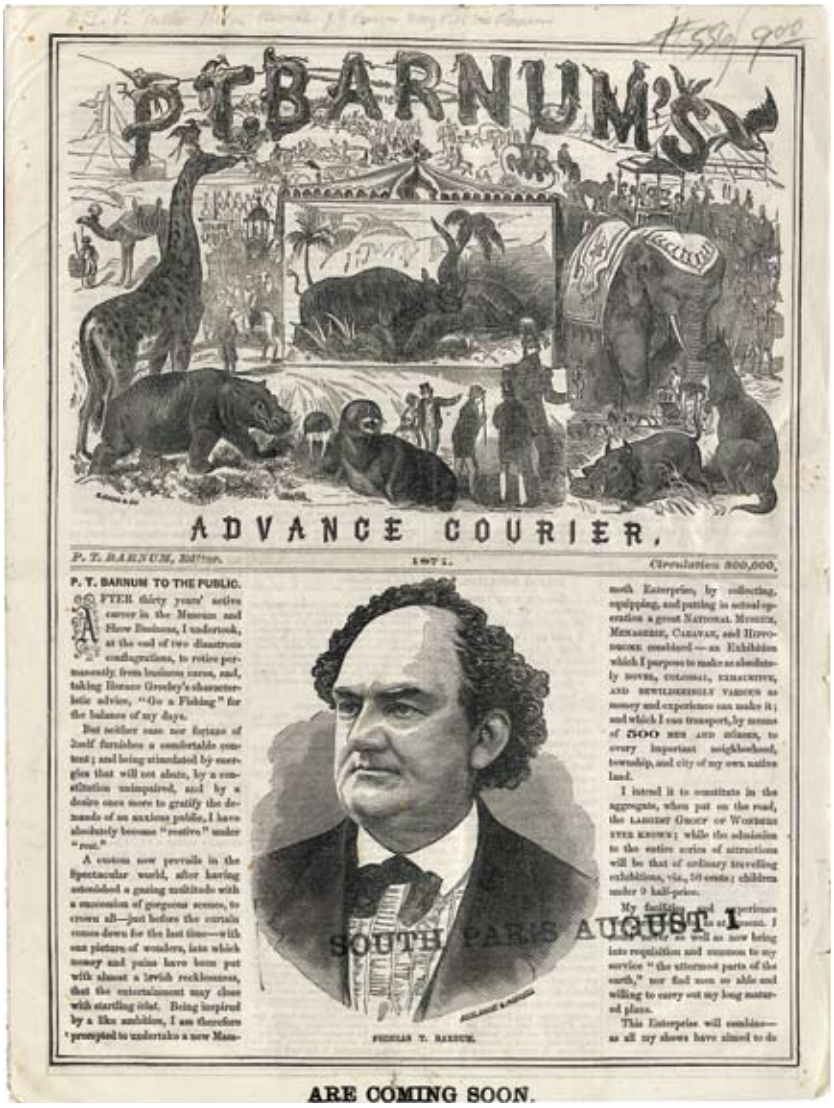
More explicitly, and almost modestly, he added to that comment in his autobiography:

> "My third and final object is not to lose money by the operation, but I can truly affirm that this object hardly contemplates the making of money. I am far more anxious to put before the community a grand and triumphant show, than I am to add a penny to my competence. To make my great traveling Museum, Menagerie, and Hippodrome co-extensive in splendor with the patronage of my fellow citizens, so that it shall be simply self-sustaining, is the height of my ambition."[6]

True to Barnum's character, he did not wish the new endeavor to rest on its laurels merely as a "grand and triumphant show." No, it must grow and improve and innovate. His true ambition was revealed in the conclusion to his 1871 autobiography:

> "That [the show] may continue to increase in magnitude and merit in exact proportion to its financial receipts will be the satisfactory result. In this way I have the satisfaction at the start of putting on wheels and exhibiting at a merely nominal price of admission the most colossal series of Exhibitions ever before transported through the country. My ambition will be sufficiently satisfied in the anticipation that the great show, combining valuable instruction with innocent amusement, shall become at once an institution worthy of its originator and of the country which gave him birth."[7]

Barnum's experience as a young man publishing his own newspaper would serve him well in the many facets of his career, and especially so in promoting the multi-faceted new show. With contracts signed and plans in the works, he began mapping out the content of *Barnum's Advance Courier.* Couriers are tabloid-sized newspapers containing enticing illustrations and promotional articles, distributed ahead of



Cover page of Barnum's Advance Courier, *1871, promoting the first season of his circus enterprise, P. T. Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome.*

Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library

the circus's arrival at each town. Their purpose, of course, was to boost ticket sales. Barnum was a master promoter, and knew from his earlier triumph with Swedish Nightingale Jenny Lind that greater profits were to be made if the public was well "primed" before an event, eager to purchase tickets.

Shortly before Christmas in 1870, Barnum wrote to Samuel Clemens, a fellow resident of Connecticut known to readers as Mark Twain, asking if he would consider contributing a piece for this first issue of *Barnum's Advance Courier*. Barnum said that he planned to have several hundred thousand copies printed, and that his advertisers in each town would distribute them. As he explained his proposal,

> "It struck me that perhaps you would at your leisure write me a characteristic letter on the show business (or any other subject) which I could publish in my *Courier &* for which I will pay the money or reciprocate in any way you may suggest in the columns of my paper – either in advertising or noticing your *Innocents* [*The Innocents Abroad,* pub. in 1869] or whatever else is desired."[8]

Hoping to convince Clemens, he added that a mutual friend, Joel Benton, "thinks the idea is a good one for us both, and he hopes you will see it in that light & act accordingly."[9] Either Clemens rejected the idea or had other reasons for not following through, as there is nothing authored by Mark Twain in the 1871 issue of Barnum's courier.

The masthead of the 1871 *Barnum's Advance Courier* in the collection of the Bridgeport History Center – an updated issue from the summer of 1871 – states that Barnum was the Editor and the paper's circulation was 800,000. The courier is impressive, containing 24 pages filled with articles, copious illustrations, and many columns of advertisements.[10]

The most exciting element is the centerfold, boldly yet elegantly designed to feature the highlights of this "Moral Exposition of the Wonder World." The prominent central panel features Barnum's portrait nestled between an elephant and a giraffe, and surrounded by other exotic animals and tropical trees. Bordering this scene at the top and bottom are vignettes. These show a parade of elephants, camels, horses, and elaborate wagons; a landscape of immense circular tents; agile bareback riders and gymnasts; even Gen. Tom Thumb's miniature coach and ponies, with himself performing classical poses. (The latter was probably meant to represent another little person, however.) The Museum component is represented by "animate and inanimate curiosities," many of which would be familiar to those who had visited Barnum's museum on Broadway: a wax-figure tableaux of the Last Supper, and of Chang and Eng; also, the Sleeping Beauty which appeared to breathe; Egyptian mummies, mechanical figures, the Happy Family of birds and beasts, and many other attractions. Since these were destroyed in the fire, Barnum would have had to acquire similar items anew, though for this purpose he probably had the printer reuse old woodcut print blocks, not intending to exactly represent his new exhibits.

What was Barnum's vision for this immense show? As he tells his audience on the front page of the courier,

> "I am prompted to undertake a new Mammoth Enterprise, by collecting, equipping, and putting into actual operation a great NATIONAL MUSEUM, MENAGERIE, CARAVAN, and HIPPODROME combined – an Exhibition which I purpose [sic] to make as absolutely NOVEL, CO-

> LOSSAL, EXHAUSTIVE, AND BEWILDERINGLY VARIOUS as money and experience can make it; and which I can transport, by means of 500 MEN AND HORSES, to every important neighborhood, township, and city of my own native land."[11]

The phrase "500 men and horses" became a mantra to describe the scale of the show; it is repeated time and again in lead-up promotions, in the courier, and in other advertisements. In addition, as Barnum had done with his New York museum, he called attention to the integrity of his "instructive entertainments," reassuring the public that these marvels were worthy and uncorrupting, and that the watchful eyes of management would guarantee decency at all times. In other words, his show would be held to a far higher standard than others; "seedy" entertainment this was not.

> "WHOLESOME INSTRUCTION WITH INNOCENT AMUSEMENT will in every particular *be moral and unexceptionable.* Everything will be new…[and under the supervision of the celebrated Dan Castello] my patrons may be assured that nothing in the slightest degree objectionable or prejudicial to the most refined tastes will be permitted."[12]

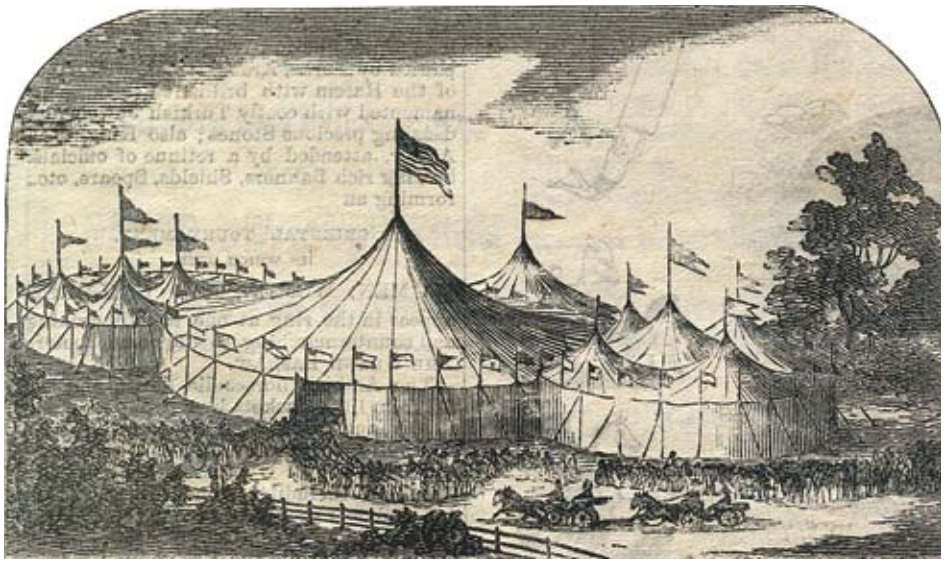
In veritable Barnum style, he informed the public, "I expect to make this the CROWNING SUCCESS OF MY MANAGERIAL LIFE." He also noted that he himself would "direct the enterprise, while W. C. Coup, Esq., my General Manager (a gentleman of unequalled ability in his specialty) will superintend the daily operations of the *great moving army* during its triumphant procession throughout the land."[13] A moving army it was, but one that still traveled on roads, thus limiting its furthest destinations in the first circus season. (The operation switched to railway transportation in 1872.)

Announcements of the show's opening appeared in the early April 1871 issues of *The Brooklyn* [New York] *Daily Eagle* and are surprisingly subtle: no big, bold fonts blast out Barnum's name, nor were any images used. If one were simply scanning the columns of this newspaper, it would be easy to pass over Barnum's name, as it is no larger than surrounding uppercase type.

The first ad appeared in the *Eagle* on April 4, 1871, just six days before opening, with the heading, "WILL EXHIBIT IN BROOKLYN, ON FULTON AVENUE, NEAR HOYT STREET. FOR ONE WEEK ONLY, COMMENCING MONDAY NIGHT, APRIL 10."[14] It is interesting that the show was not promoted with a particular name – no "branding" at this point. Instead, a variety of names are used, beginning with "P. T. Barnum's Great Exposition of the Wonders of All Nations," which is described as "an entirely new and unprecedentedly brilliant combination of instructive amusement." The column is nonetheless quite long and descriptive of all the entertainments, and makes a clear distinction between "Barnum's Museum and Menagerie," and "Costello's Grand Circus." (Castello is the correct spelling.) It appears that a few business details might not have been completely sorted out in regard to arrangements with Castello's circus, because the text was changed in subsequent ads.

For example, the April 4th ad states repeatedly that tickets (fifty cents for adults, half for children under nine) to see P. T. Barnum's Museum and Menagerie would also get you into "The Great Costello Circus" at no additional charge. However, this was a "one way" incentive and in effect pitted one show against the other since the benefit only applied to patrons of Barnum's Great Exposition; those who paid admission to Castello's circus would *not* receive free admission to the museum and menagerie. Barnum is painted as the generous giver, while Castello is not. Barnum's tactic was intended to ensure he had a large audience, presumably anticipating that more people would opt to attend the circus and might skip his tents. By April 8, the language had been revised and simplified to say that people would be admitted to the three shows, in three colossal tents, for a single admission price; there was "No extra charge to Dan Costello's great Circus."[15]

More importantly, the April 8th advertisement presents the show name that is now familiar to us as the first iteration of Barnum's circus enterprises: "P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Hippodrome." The ad bills the enterprise as "the largest and most attractive combination of EXHIBITIONS ON EARTH with its



Barnum consistently advertised that the immense size of his show required three colossal tents covering three acres. Detail from centerfold, Barnum's Advance Courier, *1871.* Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library

Parade of elephants, camels and horses, also featuring a magnificent bandwagon and the miniature coach and ponies

marvelous aggregations of LIVING RARE WILD BEASTS; its FIVE HUNDRED MEN, HORSES, CAMELS, ELEPHANTS, DROMEDARIES, GNOOS, AND ZEBRAS." In addition, there were allegedly "One hundred thousand CURIOSITIES" to be seen.

The kickoff was to be marked by a parade. The April 4th ad announced, "On Monday morning, April 10, Barnum's Museum and Menagerie and the Superb Costello Circus will parade the principle [sic] streets of Brooklyn with all the traveling paraphernalia." The parade was billed as, "The Most Extensive in the World" and was to include "Magnificent Spectacular Cars, built in London for this establishment, and Surpassing in Splendor anything of the kind attempted in any country since the days of the Triumphs of the Roman Emperors!" The first show would commence that evening, and thereafter both a matinee and evening performance would be offered each day.

Barnum proudly informed the readers of his courier that his "street pageants" were a sight like no other, and unlike competitors whose tent shows often disappointed people who had been lured by a glamorous parade, his was merely a prelude to the far more extraordinary wonders exhibited under canvas. On the streets, free to all, the public could expect to witness elaborate 40-foot-high chariots surmounted with golden lions, elephants, and tigers; "crystal-plated dens" of reptiles, in which a famous snake charmer demonstrated his power over boa-constrictors; "Automaton Gymnasts" performing in the streets; revolving Tableaux cars; and a "great military Band of Music worth going 200 miles to witness." But there was so much more to see if one paid the modest price of admission, and Barnum's courier presented the doubtful with "Thirty-Three Reasons" why every man, woman, and child should visit.[16]

The layout of the Advance Courier was designed so that readers would be enticed to look at every page, with many of the wild animal illustrations taking the lead. Of note, the Australian Kangaroos were a "giant" sort, eight feet tall, and were sent by Gen. Tom Thumb, who had recently traveled to that continent. Instead of clustering advertisements at the end of the paper, many of the four-column pages devote the left and right columns to ads, while the middle columns hyped the show's attractions. Advertisers employed language worthy of contortionists to link their products with the illustrious Barnum, however absurd or impossible that might be, but their tone projected a sense of wonder consistent with other content.

The attractions of "The Great American Museum" included a Hall of Armor containing historic weaponry from all nations plus relics of cannibals; wax figures modeled by the artist of Madame Tussaud's in London; tree bark that was a whopping 31-inches thick and taken from the "Big Trees of California;" and a museum of natural history containing specimens of birds, animals, reptiles, and shells, altogether depicting the "World in Miniature." Not to be missed were a variety of lifelike mechanical novelties such as a magic drummer, singing birds, a goat and her kid, somersaulting gymnasts, and a group of young lady bell ringers.

A rather gruesome, life-size mechanical figure – which defies the assertion that nothing objectionable was shown – was called the Dying Zouave. Barnum claimed it was the creation of the celebrated Robert-Houdin of Paris, from whom he had purchased it for $3,000. The veracity of the claim is uncertain, as the biographical dictionary, *Olympians of the Sawdust* Circle by William L. Slout (1998), attributes the Dying Zouave to a mechanical artist named Wesley L. Jukes. Jukes was employed in various capacities at Wood's Museum in New York City, and he met Barnum in 1870. The next year, *Barnum's Advance Courier* includes Jukes as the show's "Automaton, Mechanician, and Supervisor of Statuary" in the list of top-level employees.[17]

The concept for the dying soldier was akin to the popular Sleeping Beauty that Barnum had exhibited for many years at his American Museum and included again in his new show. But instead of mimicking the gentle breathing of a maiden as she lay sleeping, the prostrate soldier appeared to gasp for breath, fighting for life as a fatal bullet wound emitted a stream of warm, red blood. The graphic portrayal of a man suffering as he neared death held a fascination for

previously used by Gen. Tom Thumb. Detail from centerfold, Barnum's Advance Courier*, 1871*

Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library

audiences in post-Civil War America; the romanticization of death and obsession with mourning was infused in popular culture of that era. Perhaps morbid curiosity also played a role since audiences in the Northeast lived far from the battlefields where men died. However, this "must-see" automaton was not inspired by the Zouave units of American Civil War soldiers, nor was it a unique or new automaton. "Dying Zouave" mechanical figures had already been exhibited in Europe. These depicted a Zouave soldier of the French Army, often with a figure alongside representing a Sister of Charity.[18]

On a humorous note, Barnum continued to get mileage from his hoax-of-a-hoax, the facsimile of the Cardiff Giant, and unabashedly billed as such. Never mind that this was not the original fake giant from upstate New York, readers were told that the question of whether it was the product of a "Yankee trick" or an actual 11-foot man metamorphosed into a "Mountain of Stone" could only be settled by their viewing the "GREAT SENSATION OF '69."

Many illustrations of wild animals enliven the pages, and not only lions, elephants and camels. Among the images are a "Vlacke Vark," a wart hog from Abyssinia; an African Eland, "the most ponderous of the antelopes;" and a Horned Horse of Tartary, "a very rare specimen of zoology" which combined attributes of the horse, buffalo, and antelope yet had the characteristics of none. Some people may have seen their fill of lions and elephants, but who among them would not clamor to see such strange and exotic creatures as these?

Human "exhibits" were also part of the show, billed as MARVELLOUS HUMAN PHENOMENA. Admiral Dot, a little person said to be four times smaller than Gen. Tom Thumb and weighing only 15 pounds, received top billing. As the General had done in past decades, Dot would sing, dance, and perform, and be seen in a miniature coach drawn by diminutive ponies (hence the use of former Tom Thumb "cuts"). "Monsieur Goliath," the French giant standing 8 feet 10 inches high and claimed to be the tallest man on earth, was also promoted.

It was Barnum's lifelong affection for his American Museum that ultimately fostered the creation of the "Greatest Show on Earth," and he enthusiastically recruited many of his old friends and performers, seeking exciting new acts to join in his latest adventure. "[It will be] the largest group of wonders ever known...," he wrote, speaking of his desire to "totally eclipse all other exhibitions in the world."[19]

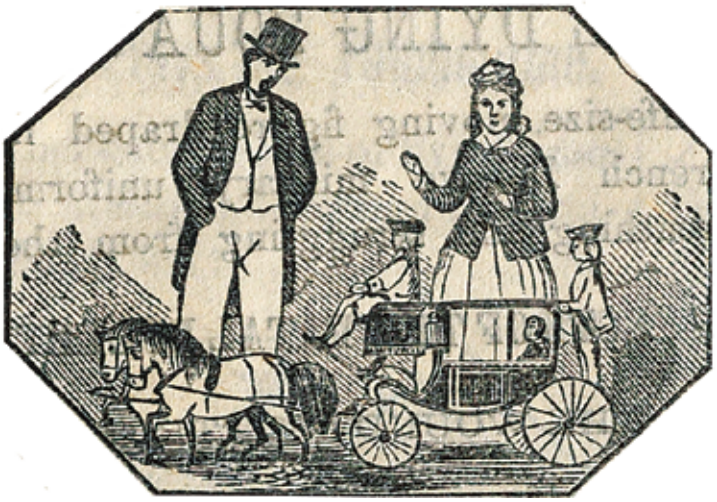
Referring to performers with physical differences as "marvels of nature" or "natural wonders," Barnum showcased their distinctions because he knew people would pay to see them. William Henry Johnson, a microcephalic Black man portrayed as the living link between man and monkey and called the "What is It?" had first been employed by Barnum around 1860 at the American Museum. This new enterprise continued Johnson's multi-decade "career," which is arguably the most troubling of Barnum's decisions – to show a person of color and a man whose intellectual limitations gave him very little agency over his life. Johnson's performances, which continued for years after his engagement with *The Greatest Show on Earth,* did pose issues of credibility to audiences at the time and perpetuated racist views of people of African heritage, a subject under mindful thought, discussion, and interpretation today.

The Hippodrome-Circus was the action arena, where patrons could see "one of the most fascinating and gorgeous hippodramatic or semi-equestrian dramas ever witnessed by the juvenile race." Titled *Sprites of the Silvery Shower,* this "enchanting Play of the Fairies" was a pantomime expressly presented for children. Mr. Dan Castello was announced as the direct supervisor of the Hippodrome, while his own circus featured a "FAMOUS SCHOOL OF HIGHLY TRAINED THOROUGHBREDS." Among the attractions was a "trick horse" named Czar, claimed to have been presented to Castello by the Emperor of Russia. Female bareback riders in the circus included Pauline Hindley, Maria Celeste Girardeau, Carlotta Da Vinci, and "Hurdle Riders" the Marion Sisters. A famous equestrian, the "daring, brilliant, and unique" William Dutton, was also featured, promoted as "the unequalled and celebrated pad and bareback

equitationist."

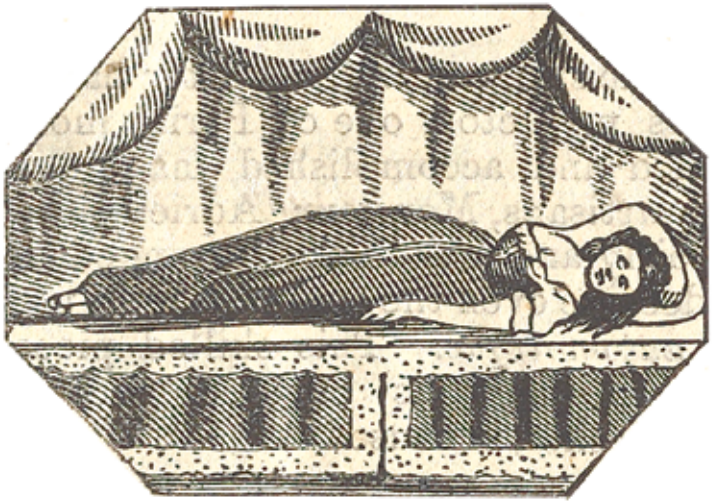
All these spectacular displays were met with unparalleled enthusiasm by the New York dailies, as Barnum noted in the courier columns devoted to excerpts from the reviews.[20] Granted, the show was supposed to open under three tents and then scaled back to two at the start, but this did not dampen the praise. An exception among the newspapers may have been *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* which seems not to have looked favorably upon circuses, and was neither quoted nor mentioned in Barnum's courier. A tragic incident that occurred in New Jersey 17 days after the start of the circus season gave that paper an opportunity to blast Barnum, accusing him of using a calamity to his benefit.

The April 28, 1871 edition of the *Eagle* published three similar accounts of the accident, describing what had taken place early in the morning on April 27 as the circus was heading to Elizabeth.[21] The "camp kitchen" wagon was crossing railroad tracks at Cranford, pulled by two mules while the driver was asleep, as were five men inside the wagon. One



"Admiral Dot" was the stage name of Leopold S. Kahn, a little person and child performer whose talents and diminutive size were showcased much as Gen. Tom Thumb's had been, including riding in a tiny coach drawn by miniature ponies. Detail from Barnum's Advance Courier, *1871.*

Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library



The Sleeping Beauty automaton, a lifelike figure that appeared to breathe, had been a popular attraction at Barnum's American Museum, and a replacement for the one lost to fire was included in the new show. Detail from centerfold, Barnum's Advance Courier, *1871.*

Courtesy of the Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library

suddenly awoke upon hearing the whistle of the train coming around the bend, and when he saw the engine heading toward them, he froze with fear, unable to act. He apparently lived long enough to relate his story, but ultimately all six men died, as well as the mules. An article in a separate column in the same paper declared that the accident was deplorable and clearly not the fault of the railroad company, concluding with the harsh remark that "Barnum is just the man to turn such a catastrophe to account."[22] Other comments suggest that this editor was no fan of circuses to begin with.

Despite the rough start, Barnum, Coup and Castello's enterprise carried on with its itinerary, stopping at towns and cities in New England and upstate New York. Though promoted in a way that suggested a far-reaching route – a triumphal tour of the country – the show's first season was actually limited to New England and New York, with a few stops in New Jersey. According to the 1871 route book, between April 10 and May 3, it appeared in New York and New Jersey, then moved on to Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island for the remainder of May. June was mainly given over to Massachusetts, including a stop at the Boston Fair Grounds, while July had the show zig-zagging between New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine. August also included a potpourri of states at the start, then focused on locations in the east central region of New York including the cities of Troy, Albany, and Schenectady. September saw a westbound trek through the Empire State reaching as far as Niagara Falls, returning eastward to Buffalo on the 25th of the month. Thereafter and through October, the show proceeded eastbound, stopping at towns along the state's southern border, then to Kingston, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh and others on the Hudson River, finishing at Harlem on October 28, 1871.[23]

Mid- to late July issues of Maine newspapers offers some clues about the operations at a mid-point in the circus season and in the easternmost locations visited, the cities and towns of Portland, Brunswick, Gardiner, Augusta (the State capitol), Waterville, and Lewiston, Maine. Barnum discovered that bringing an immense show to rural Maine presented both physical and financial challenges. Among "Business Notices" in the July 15th issue of the *Portland Daily Press,* a message from Barnum informed the public of Maine of a change in itinerary. This was necessary, he stated, because "it is found on examination that many small towns

P. T. BARNUM'S
GREAT TRAVELLING
CARAVAN & HIPPODROME
MUSEUM
MENAGERIE.
COMBINED WITH THE
Grand International Zoological Garden, Polytechnic Institute
AND
DAN CASTELLO'S
Mammoth Circus.
P. T. BARNUM, Proprietor. | W. C. COUP, Manager.
7 Superior Exhibitions in One! 7
ALL FOR 50 CENTS!
WILL BE OPEN AT THE EMPIRE RINK, 3d AVE.,
ON THE EVENING OF MONDAY, NOV. 13th,
New York, Oct 27, 1871.
Received from P. T. Barnum the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars, ($15,000), in consideration of which I hereby release him so far from his bond as to permit him to exhibit his Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, Hippodrome and Circus, in the Rink in this City, not to exceed six weeks, commencing on or about November 13, 1871.
GEORGE WOOD.
100,000 CURIOSITIES!
500 WILD ANIMALS, BIRDS AND REPTILES.
THE GREAT MUSEUM COLLECTION
"WHAT IS IT?"
The Great Menagerie, Caravan and Zoological Garden.
LIVING MARINE MONSTERS
DAN CASTELLO'S
MAMMOTH CIRCUS
The 7 Great Shows, for only One Price of Admission,
ADMISSION TO ALL, 50 CENTS.
CHILDREN, UNDER TEN, 25 "
A FEW RESERVED CHAIRS, 25 CTS. EXTRA
SEE NEXT PAGE.

where we should be obliged to stop do not contain inhabitants enough at fifty cents to cover my expenses." (His daily expenses were reported to be $2,500.) In addition, "Several bridges are also impassable for my largest chariots." This meant they could go no further than Waterville, a town 22 miles northeast of Augusta.[24] Barnum and/or Coup were likely involved in finding the solution to reach audiences further afield. A notice in the "Local and State News" column of the *Daily Kennebec* [Maine] *Journal's* July 29th issue informed the public that "An extra train runs from Bangor to Waterville to accommodate those who want to take a lesson in natural history to-day, from Barnum."[25]

Even so, the concept of a circus may have been a bit bewildering to some people living in areas of Maine that were off the beaten track. A remark made in the *Kennebec Journal's* July 21st "Local and State News" column told readers that "A person who was attentively examining Barnum's posters yesterday asked a bystander if it represented the New York riot. He was answered in the affirmative..." with a polite explanation of who the individuals in the poster represented, including Boss Tweed, Jim Fiske, Jr. and Governor Hoffman. Perhaps some editorial liberties were taken with that anecdote.[26]

Ads in the *Kennebec Journal,* serving Augusta and surrounding towns, flaunted the "500 Men and Horses" with numeric detail: 245 Men and 270 Horses, and promised "Three Mammoth Pavilions [covering] Nearly Three Acres." Aware that many in this potential audience held to strict religious views on morality and respect for the Sabbath Day, Barnum's ad assured there would be no show on Sunday, and that the circus was set up in a completely "separate and distinct tent." For those who dared entertain the idea of seeing a circus, they might be persuaded by the knowledge that Castello's circus was "represented by 50 of the best performers in the world, and conducted to be absolutely chaste, and refined, where there will not be permitted a solitary feature, look, word, or

This herald announced the opening of Barnum's show on November 13, 1871, in the Empire Rink on Third Avenue in Manhattan; the traveling show had concluded in Harlem on October 28. Barnum added more wild animals to the entertainments in this vast structure, and expanded to seven exhibitions.

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gesture in any way incompatible with that decency and respectability which have always characterized Mr. Barnum's amusement enterprises for the last thirty years."[27]

As he did at all the show locations, Barnum sold cheap copies of his autobiography, discounted from $3.50 to $1.50. The *Daily Kennebec Journal* ads advised people they could easily obtain books "from the agent on the lot the day of exhibition."[28] Even better, a fifty-cent admission ticket was included with each book. The ingenious incentive served Barnum's dual interests: profit-making and self-promotion. He made additional money, and people read about his life. The better people knew him, the more likely they were to return and see his show each year, or to tell others about it – he was integral to the brand.

Barnum's Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome returned to New York in late October. The *New-York Daily Tribune* noted the addition of sea lions and a South American hippopotamus among other new features. In fact, Barnum's "ample and various collection had increased so much" since opening in April that his three enormous tents had twice been enlarged.[29] Saturday, October 28, marked the last performance of the traveling show, which, according to Barnum, had earned daily attendance figures of 15,000 to 20,000. These numbers surely did not reflect ticket-sales in small towns.

In mid-November, Barnum opened in Manhattan, where he planned to remain for the holiday season. Ironically this plan meant purchasing back the rights to have his "museum" in the City. Since the late 1860s, after Barnum's second museum burned, another museum owner, George Wood, had been paying Barnum a percentage of gross receipts for the exclusive privilege of promoting himself as "authorized successor to P. T. Barnum for the City of New York." A handbill announcing the opening of Barnum's new show featured, in bold print, a statement of receipt from Wood dated October 27, 1871. In it, Wood stated that he had received $15,000 from Barnum, "in consideration of which I hereby release him so far from his bond as to permit him to exhibit his Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, Hippodrome, and Circus . . . not to exceed six weeks…"[30]

Barnum turned his attention to getting children in to see the show. On October 31, 1871, he contacted Nate Beers, his wife's cousin in New York, hastily writing, "Very big show opens in Rink on 13th Nov. Is there any way we can reach children by presenting teachers in public schools with tickets?"[31]

The "Rink" Barnum referred to was the Empire Rink on Third Avenue at Sixty-Third Street. It was a colossal structure, 350 feet long by 170 feet wide, with an arched ceiling 70 feet high. It was the first enclosed ice-skating rink in New York City, and opened in December of 1868. Since the month of November and most of December would not likely have been cold enough to lay down and maintain the ice, Barnum's show filled the gap before the skating season. Here, it was advertised, one could purchase admission to the "whole vast aggregate of SEVEN SUPERIOR EXHIBITIONS IN ONE." The price remained fifty cents, but an additional twenty-five could buy a reserved seat. Barnum's ad in the December 13, 1871, issue of the *New-York Daily Tribune* hyped a new reason to attend with illustrations of a rhinoceros and a fearsome-looking spotted hyena from Africa.[32] The hyena was a famous former resident of the London Zoo, and, so the ad noted, a particularly vicious and aged animal at 65 years. It had been known to destroy two dozen massive iron dens and kill 20 valuable animals. "Except the brute be occasionally tethered, nothing less than a solid iron cage will hold him, as he has the LARGEST AND MOST POWERFUL JAWS OF THE CANINE SPECIES."

Apparently, it was the method of tethering the animal that caused Henry Bergh, founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1866), to advise a change.[33] Bergh had visited the animal living quarters of the menagerie and circus, and for the most part approved of the conditions in which animals were housed and cared for. However, seeing that the hyena's chain held him close to the ground, Bergh felt it should be lengthened. This recommendation prompted an outrageous challenge from Barnum to Bergh, which formed the primary text of the ad and painted a very different picture of Bergh's comments.[34]

The caption under the hyena illustration declared that Mr. Bergh had ordered the animal *be let loose.* Further down we learn that "Mr. Barnum is perfectly willing to abide by the law, if convinced that his animal-keepers are subjecting them to unnecessary cruelty, or unkind treatment, but in the matter of this HYENA, prefers to have Mr. Bergh himself TAKE THE INITIATIVE OF LETTING THE ANIMAL LOOSE, as HE is expected to do to-morrow night." Barnum, of course, saw the opportunity to attract patrons by sensationalizing a rather small incident, and was fully aware that Bergh had not suggested releasing the hyena. (It should be noted that Barnum and Bergh had known one another since 1866, and despite their differences not only came to respect one another but also formed a friendship; years later Barnum served as one of Bergh's pallbearers. Barnum even bequeathed money for a statue honoring Bergh, and made a legacy gift to the NYSPCA.)[35]

There are undoubtedly dozens more intriguing stories to discover about the inaugural year of Barnum's combined museum, menagerie and circus enterprise. Yet this overview of 1871 imparts the excitement of the show's inception as well as revealing a few of the challenges it faced. Illuminating the historical context in which Barnum's circus legacy came about also reveals a few disturbing realities of that era's popular entertainment, some of which Barnum played into, giving the audience what they wanted while attempting to "elevate" the quality of attractions and their presentation. His vision to eclipse competitors in every facet of his show meant expanding at a lightning pace, and to facilitate that

purpose, he and Coup made the bold leap to moving the show by rail the next season. Soon the new enterprise that bore his famous name would emerge as the *Greatest Show on Earth,* fulfilling the sentiment Barnum expressed at the start of his ultimate venture:

> "If in this LAST GREAT EFFORT I bring to your doors, as I am fully determined to do, the largest and best show you and your children have ever witnessed, my object will have been accomplished.
>
> The Public's Obedient Servant,
> P. T. Barnum"[36]

About the Author

Adrienne Saint-Pierre is the Curator at the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where she works with thousands of artifacts, art, and documents pertaining to P. T. Barnum, his family, and famous associates.

She recently completed an extensive blog series drawing upon a 750-page copybook of Barnum's letters from the 1840s, and she continues to create behind-the-scenes videos about artifacts, which can be viewed on the Barnum Museum's YouTube channel (Curious People Wanted series). She was the project director for a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to create the P. T. Barnum Digital Collection, bringing together the complementary collections of Barnum-related artifacts and archives owned by the museum and its neighbor, the Bridgeport Public Library. These resources are accessible via the Internet in the Connecticut Digital Archive. <collections.ctdigitalarchive.org>

Endnotes

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NEW NERNST ELECTRIC SYSTEM. PRODUCING ABSOLUTELY PERFECT ARTIFICIAL SUNLIGHT, BY AN ENORMOUS DOUBLE PLANT OF 5 TONS & 50 HORSE POWER EACH.

A special lithograph was created by the Courier Company of Buffalo, New York to promote the innovative lighting system used by Barnum & Bailey in 1903. Circus patrons were encouraged to inspect the generator wagons, designated as "P. T. Barnum" and "J. A. Bailey," when they were on the showgrounds.
Chris Berry Collection

Those who picked up a copy of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the morning of April 7, 1879 learned that Cooper, Bailey and Co.'s Great Consolidated Show would be opening its season there, and in addition to "attractions and novelties never before seen in a circus ring," the crowd that made its way to the lot at the corner of Broad and Federal Streets would also see tents illuminated by electricity, an attraction that "will in itself be worth seeing."[1]

Electric lighting had arrived at the circus less than a year after Thomas Edison had begun working on his invention that would compete with, and eventually replace, gas and oil burning lamps.[2]

Following that first circus performance which was illuminated by electricity, the *Philadelphia Times* reported on its front page:

> "The electric light has proved a wonderful thing…when people entered the first menagerie tent it was as light as midday, and a man's shadow reflected on the ground was as clear and clean-cut

Big Circus

> as if it were done in silhouette. The brightness was wonderful. No moonlight ever sent out a tenth of such brilliancy. So completely were the tents illuminated that from the outside could plainly be seen on the white canvas the shadow of the animals and wagons, and even of men walking about inside."[3]

Edison was not the only scientist working to transform electricity into illumination. The generator and lighting for Cooper and Bailey in 1879 was the invention of Charles Brush who patented the "dynamo" for powering arc lights.

After inventing the lighting system that Barnum & Bailey used in 1903, German scientist Walther Nernst continued experimenting. In 1920, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for developing the Third Law of Thermodynamics. Mondadori Publishing

During a demonstration for a reporter, James Cooper said that the 18 electric lights in the circus tent were the equivalent of 35,000 gas jets. He added that the electric lighting cost his circus about $20 per hour to operate, half the cost of gas chandeliers.

Prior to the introduction of open-air arc lights, circus grounds, dressing tents and big top performances had been lit by hundreds of candles, pine knots and chandelier systems that used liquid oil or gasoline.[4] These crude methods created fire hazards, and as early as 1864 the Mabie menagerie was destroyed when its canvas was reportedly ignited by burning chandeliers during a violent windstorm in Council Bluffs, Iowa on August 2.[5]

The early big top lighting systems were also prone to mechanical failure as documented by a fire at W. W. Cole's New York and New Orleans Circus when it was in Quincy, Illinois November 4, 1874. According to contemporary newspaper reports, shortly after the performance began, a can which contained oil used by the lamps, leaked to the ground and caught fire at the base of one of the center poles. Although there was an attempt to put out the blaze, the flames soon reached the ropes holding up the canvas. Fortunately, those in the audience were able to escape from the burning tent, and there were no apparent injuries.[6]

The threat from fire was real and after several similar incidents, circuses seemed to welcome the transition to the safety that came with electric lighting, though most big shows such as Ringling Bros. continued to illuminate their tents with oil-fired chandeliers well into the early 20th Century, using a system of metal fuel reservoirs that were hoisted by ropes to the top of center poles.[7]

While Ringling's lighting department had not changed in several years, it may have been one of the only things that the five brothers from Baraboo had not improved as they rushed to fill the void created when Barnum & Bailey embarked on its European tour in December of 1897.

During the five years that Barnum & Bailey was in Europe, the Ringling Bros. *World's Greatest Shows* made significant inroads as it entered territory once controlled by James A. Bailey. When Bailey returned to the United States in the fall of 1902, he was determined to recapture the public perception that his circus was still *The Greatest Show on Earth.*

And he would do it through spectacle and innovation.

The Barnum & Bailey performance of 1903 featured acts as diverse as Cyclo, a bicyclist billed as "The Kinetic Demon,"

the Imperial Viennese casting act, three rings of performing elephants, along with dozens of performing horses and an opening pageant produced by Bolossy Kiralfy titled "The Tribute of Balkis."

The 1903 circus was billed as "bigger and better than ever before," and its arrival was heralded by a street parade described as "A Prodigal Plenitude of Princely Pageantry" that featured the new Two Hemispheres Bandwagon pulled by 40 horses. The circus grounds also included sideshows that displayed eleven models of United States Navy warships, described as "The Most Educational, Ennobling Exhibit in Existence," along with Ludger Sylbaris, supposedly the only survivor of a volcano eruption that had buried the city of St. Pierre, Martinique in the spring of 1902.

Press agents and printed material promised that the return of James A. Bailey's circus in 1903 would deliver a "full flood of foreign features, novelties and innovations," including a new lighting system that was enough of a novelty to warrant its own promotion.

Barnum & Bailey had experimented with electric lighting during the European tour, however, circus officials described the apparatus as "by no means perfect,"[8] until they began testing "a new kind of electric light" which was powered by vapor engines, "thus avoiding smoke, steam or sparks."[9]

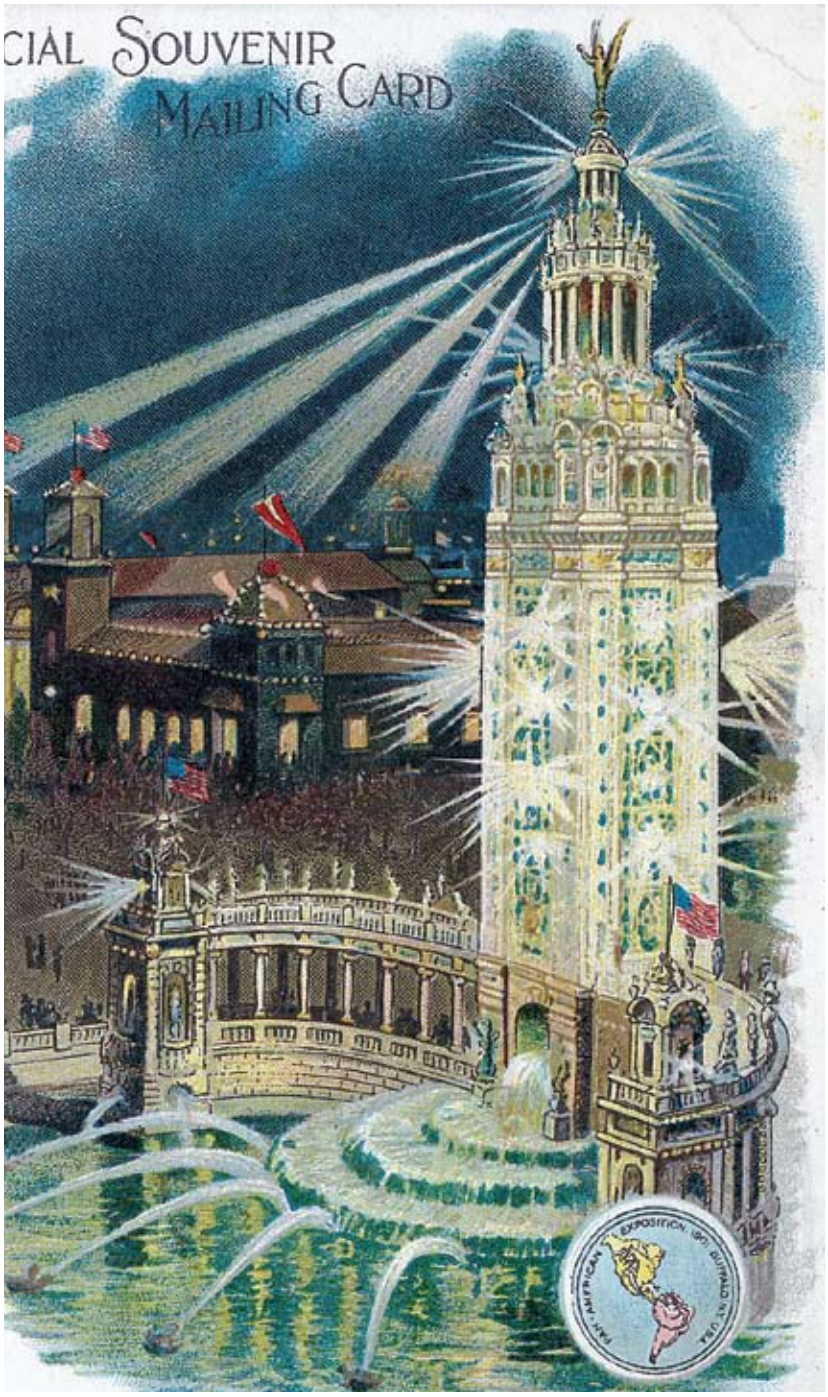
The system was designed around heat-resistant "glowers" rather than the filaments used in arc lamps and vacuum globes such as those that had been developed by Brush and Edison.

Barnum & Bailey had embraced a new technology invented by a German scientist named Walther Nernst. The Nernst lamp consisted of a ceramic rod that was heated until it glowed. The glowing ceramic created a powerful light that was much brighter than any other option available at the time, and because it did not have a filament, it would not burn out.[10]

The lighting had been used on a large scale both at the Paris Exposition of 1900 and the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in 1901 where the Electricity Building was wired with 100 Nernst lamps.[11]

Shortly after Barnum & Bailey arrived at its winter quarters in Bridgeport in the fall of 1902, it purchased 70 of the Nernst lamps, ranging in size from one to six glowers in each chandelier. The lamps would be used to provide lighting both in the big top and on the midway.

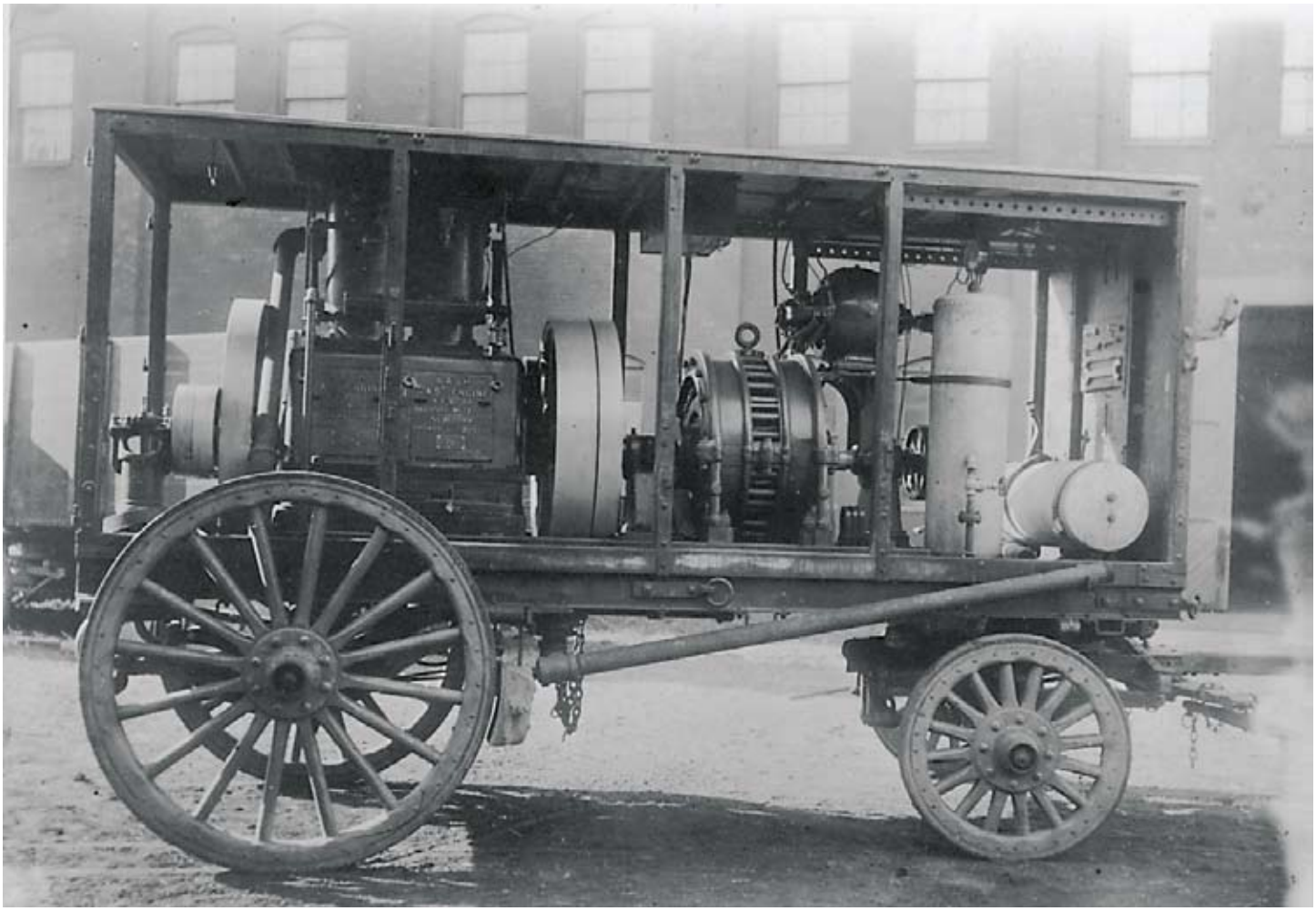
In addition to the improved illumination from the glowers, the new system was also touted for its efficiency. When the partnership with the circus was announced, Calvin Rice, vice president of the Nernst company said that when matched with comparable carbon lamps, the show would save 30 to 50 percent in operating expenses.[12]



The same lighting technique used by Barnum & Bailey in 1903 had been an attraction at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in 1901. Toronto Public Library

The circus also purchased two special engines to generate the power that would create the electrical current. The engines were placed in a pair of wagons that were designated as "P. T. Barnum" and "J. A. Bailey."[13]

The two generators were featured in a special lithograph created by the Courier Company which trumpeted "Sci-



The two generator wagons that supported the lighting system in 1903 each weighed five tons and carried a newly designed vapor engine that was described as "noiseless and absolutely safe." The Ringling, Tibbals Circus Collection

ence's Latest and Greatest Discovery." The wagons also appeared in other promotional material distributed in advance of the circus' arrival.

Each of the portable power plants weighed five tons and generated 50 horsepower.[14] However, instead of using steam engines and boilers which were noisy and carried a risk of explosion, the power was generated by a newly invented vapor engine which was described as "noiseless and absolutely safe."[15] The wagons "P. T. Barnum" and "J. A. Bailey" were billed as one of the new attractions at the circus and were open "to public inspection and investigation" on the midway.[16]

Those who attended evening performances in the Barnum & Bailey circus big top in 1903 described lighting that was comparable to the natural rays of the sun, and press releases boasted that the Nernst lighting also highlighted "the exquisite shades of color and quality of the materials in the superb costumes worn by the people in the big musical spectacle…."[17]

Although the Nernst glowers were used throughout the season, there is no indication that they were used the following year, and by 1905 Barnum & Bailey had replaced the Nernst lighting and the two generator wagons with gasoline fixtures manufactured by The Bolte & Weyer Co. of Chicago. These fixtures were self-contained, portable and did not require wiring from a generator wagon.

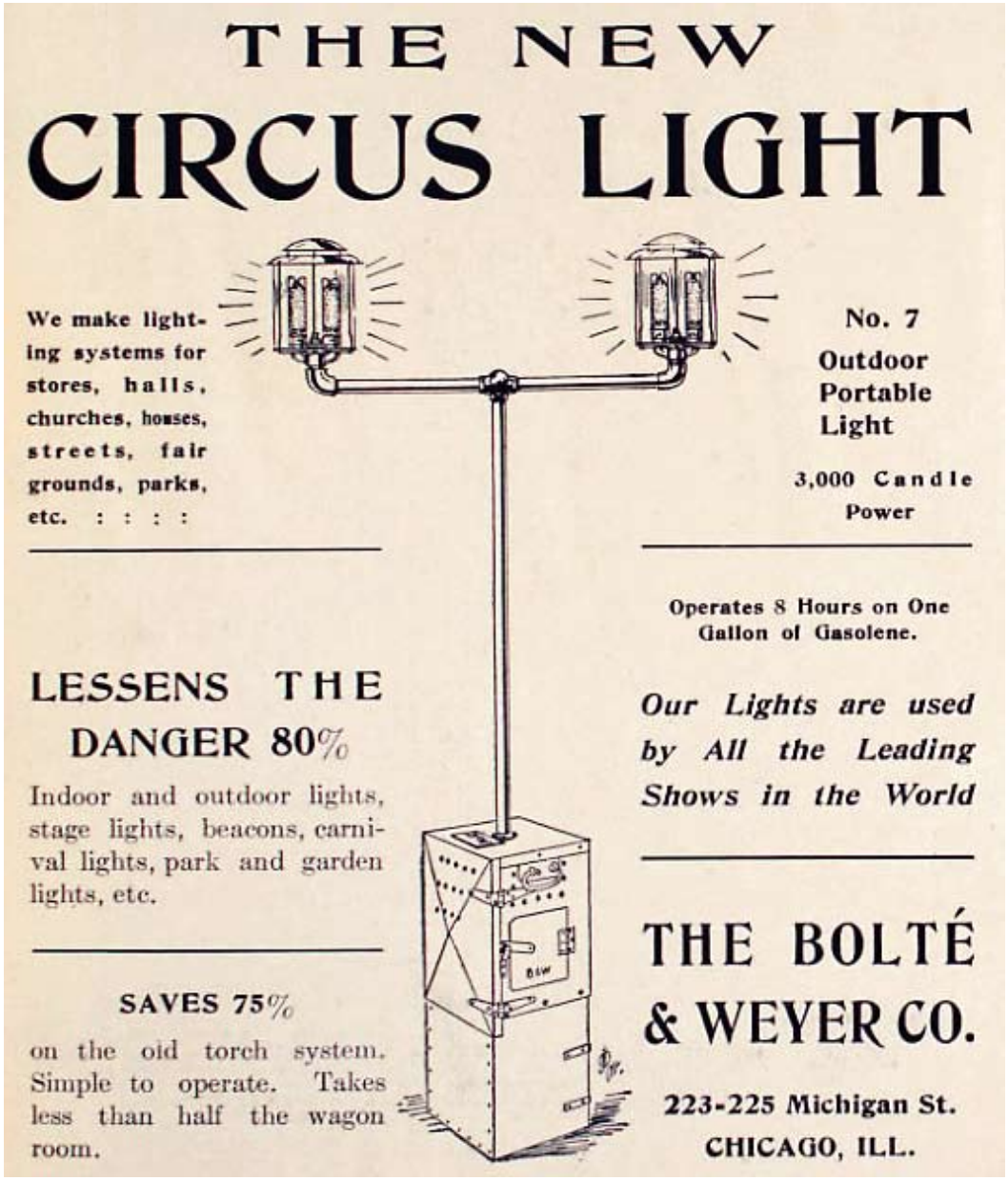
Throughout the early 1900s, George Westinghouse had success marketing the Nernst lamps to the American public until General Electric began manufacturing cheaper and more efficient tungsten-filament light bulbs in 1911. The introduction of the G. E. light bulb made the Nernst lamp obsolete and thereafter the technology was only used for research and specific medical applications.[18]

Walther Nernst, the scientist whose invention lit up the Barnum & Bailey big top and showgrounds in 1903, continued to work on other projects. In 1920 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for developing the Third Law of Thermodynamics, a scientific principle which deals with the effect of energy on temperatures, no doubt inspired by his experiments with heating ceramic to the point of illumination.

Just as Nernst continued to experiment, circus owners embraced improvements and innovations in both lighting and generator wagons. As diesel replaced gasoline and

fixtures became more manageable, lighting at the circus evolved into more than just illumination. Soon Lillian Leitzel was performing in a spotlight, and in 1941 designer Norman Bel Geddes put Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey under a navy-blue big top which allowed for new and dramatic lighting effects, a pleasing trend that continued when the circus moved into arenas, and acts such as Charly Baumann's tigers performed on sparkling mirror balls illuminated by colored spotlights.

Throughout the 20th Century the unique properties of the electric light evolved from the extraordinary to the ordinary. Although lights and lamps are now found in every business and home, in places such as Times Square and the Las Vegas Strip, the dazzling brilliance of the electric light continues to be as much of an "attraction and novelty" as it was for those who got their first glimpse of a bright light during a visit to a big circus more than 100 years ago. Bw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By the 1905 season, Barnum & Bailey had switched from the Nernst glowers to portable lighting fixtures that were fueled by gasoline. One gallon of gasoline kept a fixture lit for approximately eight hours. Chris Berry Collection

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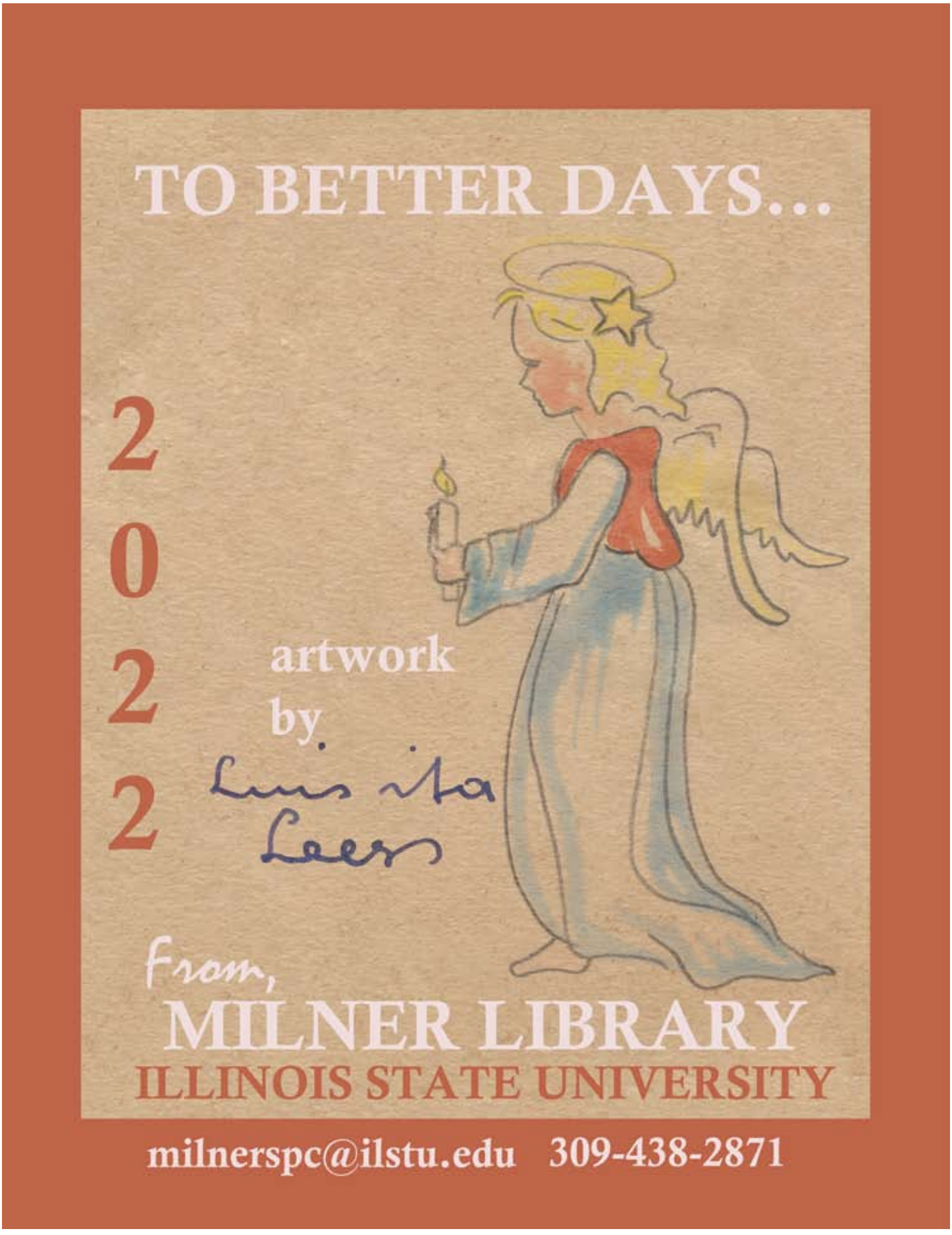
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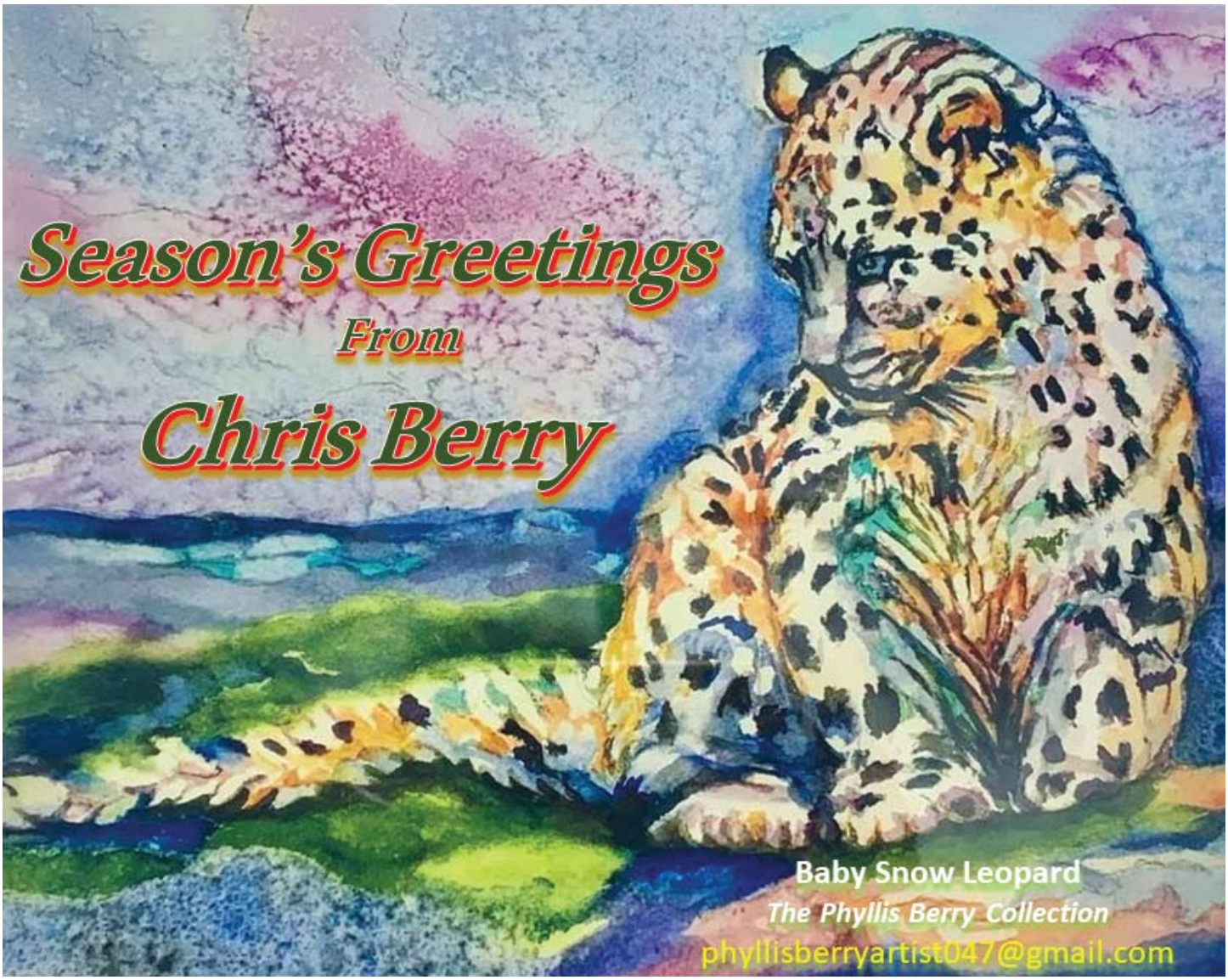

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John Pugh
A Lifetime with the Circus
Part II by Lane Talburt

Any dreams that Johnny Pugh may have harbored about attaining American stardom were quickly extinguished during his first season on the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus.

John Pugh (right) and Neil Eagles debuted their trampoline act on Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. in the spring of 1962. John Pugh Collection

Receiving scant listing as the Two Wallabies on the trampoline in the 1962 program and placed at one end of the massive, three-ring big top, John and his performing partner, Neil Eagles, found themselves in an all-too-familiar situation experienced by other European circus imports. They now had to compete for circus-goers' attention with The Titos, another troupe of acrobatic trampoline artists at the opposite end. The center ring, designated for feature acts, remained vacant while the two muscular athletes demonstrated one energetic trick after another.

Moreover, Pugh's realization that performing might not be in the best interests of his evolving career, came by observing and befriending a longtime performer as the season unfolded.

"Louis Nagy was a pretty famous clown on the show," Pugh recalled. "He also was a pretty good acrobat in his time. Louie and I used to talk about that. And that got me thinking, 'I don't want to become an old acrobat.' "[1]

As if to punctuate that reasoning, young Pugh suffered a career-ending leg injury two years later. He seriously considered returning to England where he could continue working with his father, international booking agent Digger Pugh.

At age 27, however, Johnny came to the unavoidable realization that his dad had been behind almost all of his previous engagements in European theaters and nightclubs, as well as boyhood stints on Cole Bros. in 1948 and on Mills Bros. from 1949 through 1951. In fact, Digger was the agent who signed Johnny and Neil's trampoline act – along with a half-dozen female Wallabies – onto the Beatty-Cole show for the 1962 season.

Plying on his connections with the American consulate in London, Digger had previously obtained a U.S. visa for Beatty-Cole co-owner Frank McClosky's British wife, Brenda, so that she could join Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey as a showgirl. Thus, the wealthy impresario greased the skids with McClosky for the Wallabies Duo and the all-girl acrobatic troupe to perform on Beatty-Cole.

From that point on, Digger's acolyte was in control of his own career – at least that is what he reckoned. The younger Pugh would later attribute his rapid ascension into management on two key factors:

1. His willingness to accept and fulfill every assigned task with an inherent desire to push the limits, and
2. The mentoring of Beatty-Cole General Manager Frank Orman, a circus veteran who ruled the show with an iron fist in the perpetual absence of owners Frank McClosky, Walter Kernan and Jerry Collins.

During the early 1960s, posters taped up in store windows and pasted up on other locations were still a significant part of the Beatty-Cole advertising campaigns. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

A generous dose of fate did not hurt when only a year later Pugh was unexpectedly catapulted into the GM post, pushing Orman aside. The aging showman was the victim of Art Concello's purge when the former flier took control of the circus for its 1966 tour.

Orman had been loyal to both the circus and its namesake, Clyde Beatty, when McClosky and Kernan foiled an earlier attempt by Concello to assume ownership of the Beatty railroad show in 1956, even as he held the first lien on the show's assets.

With the financial backing of Collins, a millionaire whose investments included dog tracks in Sarasota and Orlando, McClosky and Kernan negotiated with Beatty to pay off their former boss on Ringling Bros., and guarantee Beatty's status as the show's premier performer by signing him to a 10-year pact to continue using his name in the title. McClosky and Kernan also established a new winter quarters in DeLand, Florida where they converted the formerly bankrupt rail circus to a profitable truck show using 34 newly-purchased Chevrolet cabs for the 1957 tour. Two years later the partners purchased the rights to the defunct Cole Bros. title and changed the name to the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus.

In April 1962, Pugh and his performing partner Neil Eagles flew from England to the United States where they joined Beatty-Cole for the show's indoor opener at the Long Island Arena in Commack, New York. Although they had been booked with Beatty-Cole, they were shuttled to New Jersey for a month-long stand as part of McClosky and Kernan's Sells & Gray Circus at Palisades Park. The amusement park overlooked the Hudson River and New York City, where Ringling Bros. was playing its annual date at Madison Square Garden.

The Two Wallabies made their American premiere on the smaller Sells & Gray outfit, which McClosky and Kernan had framed the previous year with Beatty equipment and ten trucks. The show was originally booked for a "short but successful winter tour of Florida in 1960-61," but was now preparing for a complete tour under canvas.[2]

The tent and seats used by Sells & Gray at the Palisades

were from Beatty-Cole, and the cast was comprised of performers from both shows.[3] Because the show's sleeper semi-trailers remained in winter quarters prior to the under-canvas tour, John and Neil roomed at a boarding house within walking distance of the amusement park.[4]

When the Sells & Gray engagement ended, Pugh and Eagles joined Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. for the rest of the season. It was there that Pugh and Eagles observed Beatty's fighting cat act for the first time. "You've got to remember, I was around a lot of animal acts in Harringay Arena" [in England], Pugh noted. "Most of them came from Europe, and they were very good. Clyde was famous," he added. "You've got to give him credit; he certainly got the crowd going."[5]

Being new on the show and in a fairly insignificant role, Pugh had little contact with the star of the show, with one notable exception. Being acquainted with Digger Pugh, "Mr. Beatty asked me if I could get a cane whip for him. I called my dad in England, and he tracked them down. But the cane whips had a lash on the end, and Clyde would take it off" for his lengthy routine in the steel cage.[6]

In addition to their acrobatic routine, Johnny and Neil "framed the swinging ladders and webs. Everybody was a web sitter." Pugh said he could not recall his weekly salary as a performer, but "it wasn't much." He and Eagles also had cookhouse privileges, and they also shared a small compartment in the snake show with the midway attraction's manager, George Allen.

"Neil and I did what we called 'cherry pie' [extra work], setting up the short side of the grandstand under the big top. We had the bandstand in the middle, which took a little longer in those days," he recalled.

"But Neil and I made a deal with the boss canvasman, George Werner, who favored the candy butchers because they took care of him financially. I talked the canvas boss into teaching me how to set the grandstand. George and I got along pretty good, but he wouldn't let anybody set the grandstands but him. And he finally gave the job to me and our crew. It was a hell of a job to do those damn bibles, but we finally beat the butchers."[7]

That task, combined with spreading the canvas during set up, paid an extra $25 per week. Driving show trucks yielded an additional $25. Both jobs were "holdbacks," meaning a portion of the earnings were not paid until the show arrived at winter quarters at the end of the tour.[8]

There was only one hindrance for Pugh. "I never drove a truck in Britain. They asked me if I had a U.S. license. I produced a license that I got in Ireland, and they exchanged

The office/ticket truck seen here on the Beatty-Cole midway in 1962, was built in 1946 as a ticket wagon and served on the Sparks Circus owned by James Edgar as well as the Clyde Beatty railroad show.

Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

that for another license almost right away. But I did get a Commercial Driver's License (CDL)," which allowed him to maneuver circus trucks. "I learned as I went."[9]

John was assigned to drive office-ticket truck #33, and Neil drove the semitrailer cab #27 loaded with grandstand bibles and chairs.

"We didn't convoy; that's the worst thing you could do," especially on nightly jumps. "When a truck was loaded on the lot, it was allowed to leave, unless it was needed for teardown," Pugh said.[10]

The office truck, with treasurer Edna Antes and ticket sellers inside, was an ungainly sight on the lot. "The original body came off some railroad show [James Edgar's Sparks Circus]. And when they went to trucks in 1957, they just took the box off a wagon and mounted it on a Chevy straight job with a V-8 engine," he explained. "The box was heavy, and the back end was where all the chains were kept. So, when you got on the road, it just wiggled itself along. And going uphill the fumes were so bad in the cab that I used to open the door, stand on the running board and just keep my foot on the gas in low gear as it went uphill. You could have walked past me."[11]

Even more frustrating for the impatient Pugh was the fact that all fleet vehicles were governed down to 40 miles per hour. So irritating was this restriction that the 22-year-old newcomer found a random mechanic who tinkered with the device to enable the truck to overtake other circus vehicles on the darkened roads between show lots. His triumph was short-lived.

During one of those overnight jumps, "I passed Luis Munoz, who had the cannon. I didn't know that he and Bill Gheen [chief mechanic] were bosom buddies. The next morning Mr. Gheen came out to my truck and went under the hood. He reset the governor with a wire through it so that you couldn't mess with it." That did not satisfy the enraged Gheen, however. "He wanted me fired; I mean, he absolutely wanted me fired. Finally, we agreed that I would take a $50 fine.

As much as Pugh would have preferred the obstinate chief mechanic to get kicked off the show, he heeded the advice of his informal career counselor, G.M. Frank Orman. "Frank told me, 'Don't fire anybody unless you've got somebody to replace them. Otherwise, you'll end up doing the job yourself.' I've always taken that as gospel."[12]

Johnny was also an usher before the start of every performance that first season, but unlike the other duties, ushering was a part of his weekly salary. That is where he learned what the sheriff's sale was. In Pugh's own words, here is how the scheme worked:

> "They roped off the front general admission wagons. So, they forced folks into one wagon in the back end general admission section [other wagons in that section also were closed]. When we filled that wagon full of people, I would get up and say to them, 'You want a better seat? It's 50 cents for adults; children are free to sit over there in those reserved seats.' And I would empty that seat wagon.
>
> "In 1962, Bob Top [one half of Top and Lauren's Skaters in the Sky] was the chief ticket seller. He had the deal, and I was the barker. We'd finally get the first reserve seat section filled, and then I'd be back to the second [general admission wagon], and I'd keep emptying them until we would work our way around to the front-end general admission seats.
>
> "Again, they actually fenced off the general admission and forced them into that one wagon and try to sell those customers on moving to the reserve seats. They had three ticket sellers down front – Herbie Webber, billed as The Great Humberto; Tommy Clarke, the prop boss; and somebody else….
>
> "I can remember the time when I was kind of like the chief usher – unpaid. I grabbed Herbie Webber's tickets, and I said, 'Let me look at what tickets you have. I have a problem. Maybe I could…' He was ready to kill me. 'Don't you ever!' – Herbie told me with not so nice language – 'Don't you ever touch my tickets again.' What happened is they used to sell reserve tickets, point to the usher to 'Put those people in their seats,' and just fold those tickets over [to be resold at the following performance]."[13]

Just how the sheriff's sale proceeds were split up remained a mystery to Pugh, who said he was never cut in on the deal. Frank Orman was the front door manager. Pugh, who had been on Cole Bros. in 1948, remembered Orman being on the show at the same time.

> "Frank was a money changer on that show. You know, a customer goes up to a ticket agent with a dollar bill, and the agent says, 'Oh no. I can't break that.' And you go to the money changer, and he shortchanges you a nickel or dime every time. That's how they made their money on the front end. As for the ticket sellers, they paid to be on that box. I mean, it was part of the scheme."[14]

In 1962, the four-pole Beatty-Cole big top seated 3,500, even more when they were strawed.[15] The separate side show-menagerie tent anchored the midway, with the snake show, hippopotamus attraction, ticket wagon, and "grease joint" placed prominently.

The show enjoyed good business as it proceeded into the Midwest, including a one-day stand at Richmond, Indiana on August 15 where the local newspaper reported a turnout of some 8,000 patrons for the two performances.

> "About 5,000 person attended the evening show. Circus officials told Tarum Shrine Club sponsors that it was the largest audience in two weeks. Nearly 3,000 saw the matinee. From the wild animal act performed by Clyde Beatty in a circular cage with

On a beautiful July day in 1962, people of all ages flocked toward the marquee entrance of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library

> five tigers and nine lions…the circus kept a lively pace. Aerialists, jugglers, clowns and the elephant acts drew enthusiastic applause."[16]

Eleven elephants on the tour were always a hit when Rex Williams capped off their routine with the moving long mount routine on the track.

In advance of a September 27 date in Kingsport, Tennessee, Beatty-Cole's chief publicist Howard Bary boasted to the Kingsport newspaper that "the circus has daily expenses of more than $7,500. It employs about 50 performers…and has to feed just about every type of animal from a small monkey to a three-ton hippopotamus." Bary also said, "the circus this year is presented under a brand-new tent, which will accommodate almost 5,000 spectators."[17]

In reality, as Pugh pointed out, the four-pole big top at that time actually seated about 3,500 spectators, including 2,000 reserve seat ticket holders and 1,500 in the blues.[18]

After a swing through familiar territory in the South, Beatty-Cole completed its 1962 tour on November 4 in St. Petersburg, Florida, having covered 14,521 miles.

At that point John's trampoline partner, Neil Eagles, left the act and returned to England. "He was disgusted with the circus," Pugh said.[19] "Neil didn't like being there with the one-day stands and travel and conditions. He had worked the theaters in Europe, and it was a different atmosphere on the circus. He just quit after the end of the year."[20]

Pugh also returned to England, but only for the winter. He found a female replacement for the next season, one of Digger's troupers, as it turned out.

The start of the new year brought bad news from America. Frank McClosky's partner, Walter Kernan, died in New York City of an apparent heart attack on January 27, 1963, at the age of 53. Kernan had been on Ringling-Barnum off and on from 1927 until 1955 when he and McClosky were fired from their executive posts following a dispute with John Ringling North, less than a year after their boss, Art Concello, had also been fired.

McClosky and Kernan "were looking for something to do, and they made a deal with the Kaiser-Frazer car company to promote a show called the Hollywood Dare Devils. It was a show like Joie Chitwood's, except they used Kaiser-Frazer cars. And my father booked them all over Europe,

Clyde Beatty's lions and tigers were housed in two semi-trailers parked end-to-end in the circus backyard in 1963.

Circus World Museum, Wisconsin Historical Society

with some great dates," Pugh recalled. "What happened is during the tour, Bob Reynolds [the former Ringling property boss] rang up those guys [McClosky and Kernan] and told them, 'You can buy the Clyde Beatty show concessions for $50,000.' So, the two of them ended up buying the concessions. They left my dad hanging with the auto devils thrill show, because he had booked the stadiums, and they didn't show up."[21]

Subsequently, in 1956, Kernan and his partner bought out the Beatty show from Concello's clutches, and this would trigger another battle between McClosky and Concello a decade later.

Kernan's death in early 1963 left his widow, Bonnie Hunt Kernan, as one-third owner of Beatty-Cole, along with McClosky and Collins. Walter Kernan had also been an associate owner of the Sells & Gray and King Bros. circuses.[22]

The show's chief financial backer remained in control of Beatty-Cole, as the AP reported following a board meeting February 11. "Jerry Collins, who owns horse and dog tracks, was elected Monday board chairman and president of the Sarasota Circus Equipment Co. Frank McClosky was elected president of the Acme Circus Operating Co., which with the Sarasota Circus Equipment Co. operated the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus…Mrs. Edna Antes [was elected] secretary and treasurer."[23]

However, Mrs. Kernan, a former Ringling performer who had traveled with her husband to Europe the year before to scout for new talent, was not content to be disassociated with the circus. Rather, as veteran circus photographer Sverre Braathen wrote before the show played Madison, Wisconsin, on August 2, "Bonnie may be found assisting in the office wagon, selecting music for "Boom Boom" Browning and his band to cue the ever-changing performance, watching wardrobe maintenance, acting as 'father confessor' to troubled troupers, keeping an eye on the ushers, and in other ways keeping the circus to its high standards."[24]

Johnny Pugh became the chief usher for the 1963 tour following the departure of Bob Top. In addition, Pugh continued to conduct the sheriff's sale, though the additional duties were a part of his regular salary. He was also behind the wheel of the office truck for a second year, however, as in the previous year he was not allowed inside the money wagon.

The new season, which opened with an April 11-21 indoor stand at Commack, took Pugh to Texas for the first time and introduced him to the power of a tropical storm.

After playing under-canvas dates in the Washington, D.C. suburbs and spending eight days in late May and early June in Philadelphia, the show made its way westward as far as North and South Dakota before dropping south through Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and entering Texas on September 3 for two performances at Corsicana.

A week later, on August 10, a praiseworthy article in the Austin daily paper greeted the troupers.

> "The Beatty-Cole show will be the first canvas-covered circus performing here since 1957, and according to one observer, it'll be the best here in 20 years. That's the advance word from Leland Antes Jr., a local circus enthusiast [and nephew of Edna Antes] who has probably seen more circus entertainment than anybody in Austin.
>
> "Antes previewed the show when it performed Sunday at Fort Hood and found the 18-display performance 'solid circus from the downbeat of "The Star-Spangled Banner" to the last booming echo of the human projectile cannon.' Antes reports that Clyde Beatty himself, after a 40-year career, 'still shows top form as the master of the steel arena….'
>
> "Among highlights under the big top, the observer cites Carla Jordon (nee Wallenda) and her husband, Paul, who have organized 'a second unit of the famed highwire family's tragedy-stalked act,' and Sydney, the performing elephant who recently filled the title role in the motion picture, *Jumbo,* plus the aerial thrills of Greta Frisk and the Flying Gaonas.
>
> "Commenting on the physical aspects of the circus, Antes says, 'A colorful balance of modern trends and traditional circus atmosphere is the secret success for a big show of this size. The long train of nearly a decade ago has given way to big semi-trailers, which allows towns without rail service to see the circus…
>
> "'With all due respect to the many fine indoor circuses around the country, one goes away from the show feeling that the big top is as important to the circus as the bun to a hot dog.' "[25]

A few days later, the show ventured northeast playing Corpus Christi on September 13 and Victoria the next day. The circus would find the unwelcome mat out at the next lot and the beginning of a trail of misery along the Texas Gulf Coast.

"Several truckloads of wild animals, performers and other personnel of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus spent the night in the Clute area Saturday but found the grounds too muddy to move in for the scheduled matinee Sunday afternoon," reported an area newspaper.[26] Unaware of pending disaster, the circus community jumped directly to Galveston, where Johnny Pugh took a brief break.

"We were all set up, and I decided to go swimming in the Gulf. The beach was close to the lot."[27] As John was returning to the circus backyard, Clyde Beatty pulled alongside in his Cadillac and offered a ride. His clothes soaking from the swim, John declined, not wanting to get the car's front seat wet. "I got back and Barrie Sloan was waiting in the trailer. I turned my radio on and said, 'What the hell is a hurricane?' And he said, 'there's one up the coast.' "

The Weather Bureau was warning that the "entire Houston area is in the danger zone" of tropical storm Cindy, and that "there is a good chance the storm will build up to hurricane force by the time it moves inland" on Monday September 16.[28]

"The radio said there were 80 mile-an-hour winds in this hurricane. And the next thing you know," Pugh recalled, "whistles were blowing, and they knocked on the trailer door. They shouted, 'We've got to move; there's a hurricane coming!' I thought to myself, 'Well, it's a little late to be telling us this.' There was a panic, you know."

Clyde Beatty, in his book *Facing the Big Cats,* recalled the show's dilemma. "We were directly in the path of [the tropical storm], and there was no likelihood that we would be able to keep our scheduled engagements for several days to come."[29]

Pugh helped tear down the tent after two performances in Galveston, and circus vehicles moved northward to nearby Texas City, the lot being a gravel parking lot at the football stadium.

The show's 35 trucks and semi-trailers were arranged in a circle to protect sleepers and personal trailers from the oncoming high winds. While some chose to take up temporary quarters in a nearby structure, "Barrie and I stayed in our trailer. We survived the blitz in London [during World War II], so why should we go into a building where we're going to be uncomfortable? The fact that we were surrounded by elephant trucks was enough," Pugh continued. "We set up the cookhouse inside the circle and ran the generator so that we could cook meals. And everybody took food back to their trailers."[30]

Beatty's recollections were similar. "The heavy downpour bogged us down in a foot and a half of water. To keep this howling gale from overexciting the big cats we created a circular wall of trucks around them…We couldn't very well silence the gale, but we could at least break its impact."[31]

There was no attempt to raise the big top in Texas City. The threatening hurricane was downgraded to a tropical storm as it moved ashore. Fortunately, wind damage was confined mostly to broken windows in the Galveston and Texas City area. But the storm's watery footprint left booked lots unplayable in Beaumont and Port Arthur. Beatty's book noted that "for five days, we were bogged down in Texas City."[32]

Following the unexpected layover, the Beatty-Cole fleet moved on to dates in familiar southern states. The 1963 tour

Frank McClosky was a veteran circus man who had been Lillian Leitzel's personal rigger and was present when she fell in Copenhagen in 1931. He worked in various management capacities on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and became General Manager in 1952. When this photo was taken in 1963, McClosky was the General Manager and controlling owner of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus.

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of just over 15,000 miles closed in Orlando November 12.

In 1964, cancer crept into Clyde Beatty's life, and a serious leg injury that same season also brought Johnny Pugh's performing career to an end.

The tour started with what had become an annual Commack, Long Island opener that drew good crowds during engagement that ran from March 26 to April 6, but as the season progressed the circus soon endured more than its share of accidents and weather-related incidents.

Pugh was joined by a new partner for his trampoline act. It was Trip Golasso, son of Joe Golasso, the show's one-finger-stand artist. Although the Two Wallabies presented a crowd-pleasing routine, it was short-lived when less than a month into the season, Johnny literally had a tough break.

"I broke my leg during a performance in Wilmington, Delaware, and it happened on May 1. Can you believe it![33] It was my left leg. I landed on the cross frame of the trampoline. It was pretty bad, a compound fracture."[34]

Pugh was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was treated and his leg was placed in a cast. He was able to rejoin the circus on crutches on the second day of the Wilmington stand where he also returned to the sleeping compartment in the snake show trailer. Two weeks later he was contemplating a return to England, where medical treatment would have been considerably cheaper, when his luck turned.

"Frank Orman came up to me and said he had spoken to McClosky, 'and we would like to keep you on.' I said, 'what can I do?' Mr. Orman told me, 'They want you to do the sheriff's sale.' I was good at that," Pugh said, "and I managed it on crutches. Finally, I went back to performing before the end of the season."[35]

The most devastating event that season was when Clyde Beatty was forced to leave the show in Owatonna, Minnesota after being diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus.

As Beatty underwent surgery to remove a portion of his stomach, rumors spread about his deteriorating health. "I think they thought that without Beatty, the show would close," Pugh said.[36]

Newspapers along the route questioned Beatty's absence and gave mixed reviews to Joe "Red" Hartman, his substitute in the steel arena.

"Hartman filled the master's shoes respectably during the matinee performance [on July 31], jabbing out with his chair and whip at the 'jungle bred' animals," wrote a Madison, Wisconsin, reporter.[37]

"The Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus without Clyde Beatty is like a donut – it's good but there's a hole in it," a Fort Lauderdale reviewer observed. "His chief assistant, Joe Hartman, has the impossible task of replacing him…Instead of confidence, grace and gentle handling of the big cats, Hartman charges through the ring throwing prodding poles at the cats to make them respond…"[38]

Meanwhile, John Pugh's frustrations with show's chief mechanic were temporarily smoothed over. During the time that he was recovering from his broken leg, Pugh would ride between towns as a passenger in snake show manager George Allen's tractor. On a rural highway somewhere in the Connecticut hills their vehicle blew its engine. "It was one of those GMC semi-snub-nose trucks that they had in the old days," Pugh recalled. "We pulled over and George Gheen pulled alongside us, screaming, 'What have you done with the truck?" But I'll give him credit. We changed that engine by hand. Gheen and his assistant humped the old engine out and broke it up and rolled it off the hill. We carried the new engine around by hand and put it in. We were on the next lot by 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon."

Three months after Pugh's fractured leg had healed,

John rejoined his trampoline partner for the final weeks under the big top. Also, Frank Orman chose John to drive his personal car and trailer. "Orman really liked me. He was a pretty tough guy, but his age was getting to him. So, I became his runner and did all the dirty work around the lot.

"I was pretty enthusiastic in those days. The hay truck would arrive, and I'd unload it. And Frank would be screaming at me, 'Don't do that; get the guys to do it. You just watch and make sure they do it.' I learned a lot from Frank; he was very, very good to me."[39]

Still, troubles mounted during the summer months.

On July 16 two workingmen were injured in Winona, Minnesota when a sudden gust of wind blew down the partially erected big top. "The wind blew stakes and supporting poles out of the soft, sandy soil during the setting-up process, sending the main pole crashing into the steel cage in which Clyde Beatty's trained animal act takes place," the local newspaper reported. "A pole snapped, and the tent was torn. The injured men were taken to Community Memorial Hospital for treatment. The show, however, will go on."[40]

Although the show did go on after the blowdown in Minnesota, heavy rainfall in Appleton, Wisconsin forced the cancellation of performances on July 28. "Circus management had explored numerous sites to try to find one dry enough. All were too wet. Trucks and wagons sunk axle-deep in mud at most sites."[41]

A freak accident nearly claimed the life of the hippo caretaker during set up at Kokomo, Indiana, on August 18. "Captain George Schaffer, trainer of 'Big Otto,' the largest known hippopotamus in the world, was knocked 15 feet to the ground by an electrical shock while hooking up the lights on top of Big Otto's showcase," the *Kokomo Tribune* splashed on its front page. Schaffer was treated and released from St. Joseph Memorial Hospital.[42]

The same Kokomo newsman attended the Beatty-Cole performance that night. He came away with an ambivalent take on Beatty's replacement. "The unexpected bit of excitement in the first act set the mood for the remainder of the night," the account read.

"Joe Hartman, a talented young man who dreamed of becoming a featured animal trainer since childhood, got his chance to prove his ability Tuesday night…Hartman gave a thrilling performance, although many believed things might get out of hand near the end of his act. A roaring fight between three of the lions erupted as they began filing out of the cage. Hartman was not able to separate the frantic beasts and before long, scurried out the cage himself."

A month and a half later, Beatty-Cole's return to the Gulf Coast coincided with the arrival of Hurricane Hilda. This time the target was New Orleans, which was booked for October 2-4. The slow-moving system came ashore on September 31, causing a rain-out on October 1 at Morgan City, some 85 miles west of "The Big Easy." A photo cutline in the local paper bemoaned the fact that "the only performance these two elephants in the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus executed here was when they pulled one of the large circus trucks out of a ditch. Because of an impending visit from Hurricane Hilda the circus decided not to unfold its tents."[43]

The three-day stand in New Orleans was also scratched, though the big top was raised in the air, and vulnerable trucks were boarded up in preparation for hurricane-force winds. "We had to blow the date," Pugh recalled. " In those days that was *the* date. We used to get a half million dollars on it."[44]

A single paragraph AP dispatch revealed the show's inevitable decision. "The Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers Circus folded its tents in New Orleans and quickly slipped away."[45]

Picking up its scheduled route, the circus headed for Florida, where it had planned to close its season in Orlando November 2. The outfit then made an immediate turnaround and headed west, back to New Orleans, arriving just across the Mississippi River in Gretna, for a November 5-8 engagement. Pugh said that making up the date was a financial necessity. If the circus had not returned to New Orleans a month after the cancelled performances, revenues from considerable sponsor and phone room pre-sales would have been lost.

"Frank McClosky always said to me, 'Don't give up that phone sale, even if you have to give an open-air show," Pugh recalled. "Because the real killer about having to return the money from the phone sale is that the phone promoter got 35 percent off the top before we got to town. So out of every dollar you'd be giving 35 percent more than the sponsor collected."[46]

Johnny Pugh was assigned to drive the office truck for the home run to the DeLand winter quarter in 1964. "It usually left after intermission when Edna Antes was out of the wagon. This time we had to wait until everybody was paid off." With the rest of the caravan already on the road back, Pugh was the last to leave the lot.

With hundreds of miles ahead of him, Pugh was warned by mechanic Bill Gheen to add oil to the vehicle's engine every 50 miles or so. His cast now off, Johnny took on a Cuban performer as a passenger and headed toward the fleet's overnight rest stop in Gulfport, Mississippi. Most troupers were already asleep when Pugh pulled into mechanic Bill Gheen's designated truck stop. After downing a cup of tea – he disliked coffee intensely – and refueling, Pugh made an impulsive decision. "Let's just keep going. So off we went, and by dawn we'd gotten to Destin…we kept going and we got into DeLand. I'd never been to winter quarters before. We were ahead of the whole fleet by that time, and it was still pitch-black outside."

Pugh parked the office truck on a downhill slope in front of an old hotel in downtown DeLand, blocked its wheels, then checked in – another impulsive decision.

The two early birds left downtown about 9:00 A.M. for the short jump home, "and I let the truck roll down, put it in gear and jumped it off. To tell you the truth, I couldn't get it above second high all the way out to winter quarters. I just barely got it over the railroad tracks at the entrance. By that time, I was really disgusted with Bill Gheen, so we pulled right into the middle of the gate and I shut the engine off.

"Bill came out and screamed at me. And I said, 'Mr. Gheen, I just barely got the truck here, and it just stopped.' Bill worked on this truck for three hours trying to make it start. Finally, Mr. McClosky showed up in his limousine and yelled, 'Get that [expletive] out of the way.' Rex Williams was there, and they got an elephant to tow the thing back to the mechanic shop."[47]

By that time Pugh was already in good standing with top management. "I handled inspections for them, and I was Johnny-on-the spot – whatever I could do..."[48]

Contemplating his possible return to Beatty-Cole in 1965, John was at a career crossroads. Although the 1964 tour had covered more than 16,500 miles and was a success both financially and artistically, the show's immediate future was murky.

In reviewing the season for *Bandwagon,* Tom Parkinson stated, "Between the show's pre and post season jumps came a national tour of generally good business." Although he pointed to weaknesses along the route – Minnesota and Texas among them, the former *Billboard* writer referred back to the make-up dates in New Orleans as a bright spot. "On Saturday (November 7) two shows were scheduled and it took three to handle the crowds, and on Sunday two matinees were planned but three were given."[49]

On the other hand, Clyde Beatty's battle with cancer and his uncertain future on the circus clouded the horizon.

In late October, while the circus was in Florida, a Miami newspaper dispatch created further confusion. "Circus star Clyde Beatty is still convalescing from a stomach operation but hopes to rejoin its performances here this weekend. Beatty underwent an operation for ulcers several weeks ago in Chicago and is now at his home in Ventura, Calif. The famed animal trainer…lost considerable weight during his illness and his convalescence has been slow, friends said."[50]

Left undecided was whether Red Hartman would return for the coming tour as Beatty's replacement in the show's signature act.

Looking back, Pugh seemed to have found a home during his three-year stint on the show. His hopes for increased responsibility were boosted toward the end of the season by assistant manager Walter McClosky, younger brother of Frank McClosky, who waved the possibility of Pugh being named performance director for the show in 1965.

When the season closed Johnny returned home to England where he spent the winter working once again with his father, still the possibility of a management position on Beatty-Cole was at the forefront of his mind. Bw

Acknowledgments

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Coming up

In Part III, John Pugh returns to Beatty-Cole an assistant manager for the 1965 season against his father's wishes. He also hears rumors about Bonnie Kernan putting her one-third share of the circus into the hands of Art Concello, a potential threat to Frank McClosky, the show's president who controlled the remaining two-thirds. Almost in the blink of an eye, Pugh is unexpectedly elevated to general manager in 1966. Facing a behind-the-scenes dogfight with Concello over the issue of retooling Beatty-Cole to play indoor arenas, John's accumulated experiences in the English and American circus business starts to pay off. But can he secure his management foothold in the face of in-house jousting among circus executives?

Endnotes

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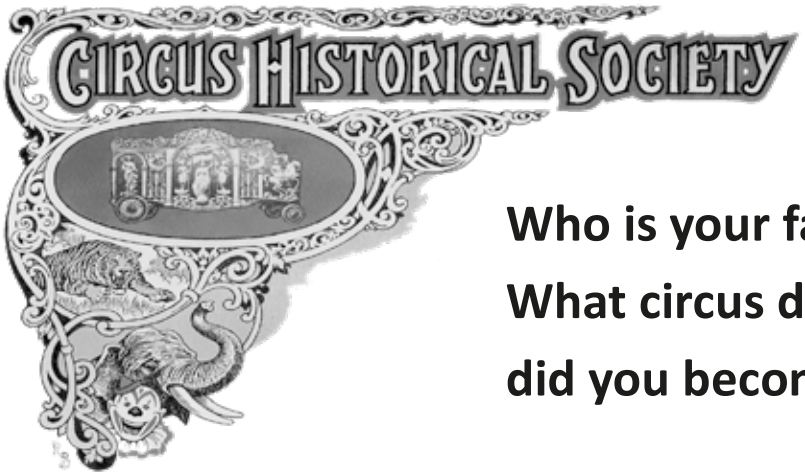

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